

Jinglebob O

Philip A. Rollins

**THE PACIFIC CENTER
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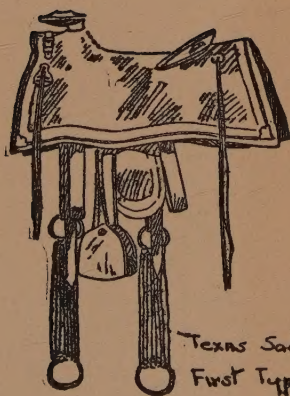
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JINGLEBOB



Texas Saddle -
First Type.



Turned upon his side while in the air, fell flat upon the earth.

JINGLEBOB

A TRUE STORY OF A REAL COWBOY

BY

PHILIP ASHTON ROLLINS

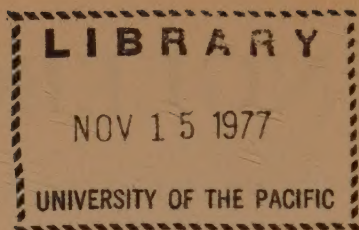
AUTHOR OF "THE COWBOY"



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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TO
CERTAIN DEAR DEAD FRIENDS
WHO,
WHEN ALIVE,
WERE BOWLEGGED AND WORE CHAPS

PREFACE

AMERICA has had two types of cowboy, the synthetic and the real.

The better known cowboy, the synthetic, is the son of imagination; and, living upon a cattle range which is bounded by either the covers of a novel or the edges of a silvered screen, he has indefatigably devoted himself to the rescue of ranch-owning heiresses and to the extinction of their scheming and amative foremen.

The synthetic cowboy has been an important element in American life, inasmuch as he has given great pleasure to many thousands of readers and of theatregoers. May the synthetic puncher forever continue!

But America has had also the real cowboy.

He dwelt upon the cattle range of actuality; and, there being in this latter and almost womanless realm no heiresses available for succor and but very few dishonest foremen, the real cowboy was compelled prosaically to earn money wages by herding live stock. Being real, he had a stomach which demanded beef, bacon, coffee, beans, and, if not sour-dough bread, then corn pone: foodstuffs which could not, under the conditions of the times, be purchased either by hints of prospective matrimonial dot or by prophecy of future plaudits from patrons of bookstores and "movie houses." The keynote of his existence was hard work.

Nevertheless, he led an heroic life; because the animals with which he dealt were the savage long-horn cattle and the turbulent broncos, and also the area in which he

labored was, by joint reason of its climate and the sparseness of its population, disposed to be unfriendly. The desert, the canyon, the quicksand, the cut bank, the blizzard and the norther asked no favors and gave no quarter.

He was a constructive factor in that he not only supplied the nation with the major portion of its meat, but also was dominant in the shaping of civilization in Texas and in America's West.

Brave, he had to be; constructive, he was; but also he, as a companion, could be generous and gentle.

Those of us who were intimately associated with the real puncher possess an heirloom of memory. We have in our hearts and heads little corners filled with affection and profound respect.

Typical of old-time "top" punchers was Jinglebob, under the brand of whose name this book ventures into public view. As set forth in print, he represents no fanciful creation by an author, no grouping of the characteristics of several cowboys. He is described just as he was in fact, just as he rode for the ranch and "played his final ace."

The real puncher, in successive generations, still persists in the various backwashes of Texas and the West; but his numbers are sadly reduced and he no longer dictates the social and political thought throughout one-third the area of the United States.

This book, which attempts to portray the conditions faced by the old-time cowboy, would have been an accurate history of the particular events with which it deals, if it had not been made fictional by the following tamperings with fact—even the conversations, thanks to the memoranda in a diary, are, except for one sentence on page 187, probably almost verbatim echoes.

As to the tamperings. The names of some of the characters and of all the ranches are assumed, as also is the location of each mentioned ranch. The actual experiences of three tenderfoots on two ranches are so consolidated that they appear to have been had by two pilgrims on a single ranch. Events that actually were spaced through three years are crowded into one; and therefore, by thus arbitrarily antedating the "winter drift" reported in Chapter XII, that catastrophe may have been made to occur when the local weather was, in fact, most clement. And finally the described trail drive, though happening in experience, did not take the cattle to the spot alleged.

Wherefore, if as regards this drive the author has on paper forced cows, not only to cross the Yellowstone River where it could not be crossed, but also subsequently to range where grass and water were either non-existent or already "taken up," he apologizes.

But he will not apologize for his assertion that the American cowboy of reality and of history was a great and constructive citizen.

As a tribute to that cowboy, this book is written. And the tribute applies especially to the man Jinglebob, who would have received more frequent mention in the pages had he not, because a typical top puncher, consistently sought the trail of duty rather than the limelight. In appreciation of his diffidence he, though the backbone of this book, is not forced to ride blatantly through it.

The old-time cattle range was filled with saga-stuff that courted no narrator.

P. A. R.

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Turned upon his side while in the air, fell flat upon the earth

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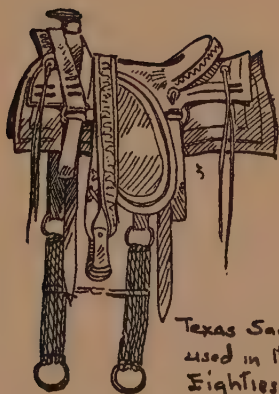
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JINGLEBOB



Texas Saddle
used in the
Eighties —

JINGLEBOB

CHAPTER I

THE TENDERFOOTS ARRIVE

PLACE yourself beside the Union Pacific Railroad's track four miles westward of the Pine Bluff station in Wyoming at dawn on a certain July day in 1883.

Near you in the gloom are a few faintly glowing embers from a dying fire, and strewn upon the ground about them lie misshapen packages that in fact are sleeping men. Just beyond looms a formless bulk that presently, in the gathering light, will prove itself to be a chuck wagon. Further afield, the grotesque shapes of hobbled horses, each with its front feet tied together, move about like giant hoptoads. Scattered among them are still other horses, some moored by picket ropes, others allowed to go untrammelled. As for sounds, there are none save the sighs and snorts of the grazing beasts, and the thuds that are caused by shackled hoofs descending onto earth.

In a moment and from far to the eastward, there mumbles the whistle of an oncoming train. An instant later, logs are thrown upon the camp fire, the parcels about it wriggle, and stand erect as yawning cook and cowboys. The cook dons his hat, and thereupon he sets about preparing breakfast.

In lopes the last of the nightherders, querulous after hours of patrol in the sage-brush, and ready to make vehement and unrefined complaint in case the cook should

prove slothful in the coffee making. "Did the Old Woman die last night? 'Pears like he did, for there's nothin' steamin'. I needs coffee in my gizzard. It's friz stiff."

The whistle sounds again, this time much more loudly; the air pulsates with the labored breathing of a locomotive bound upgrade. There is the screech from brakes, and the train stops in order to disgorge two passengers and their baggage. Cook and cowboys desert the comfort of their fire, and, surging toward these voyagers, utter coyotelike yelps of greeting accented by pistol shots.

This signifies no bandit attack upon a train, no drunken orgy—merely that Mr. George Edward King and his brother Bill, making their first trip Westward, are about to visit their uncle's ranch, the Tumbling K, and are being properly welcomed by an outfit from that ranch.

When this Mr. George Edward King alighted from the train, he did so with all the dignity that befitted a person who, the eldest son of an Eastern banker, was a senior in one of the most prominent colleges on America's Atlantic coast, and by his classmates was called "The Duke."

Bill's exit was less conventional. In his enthusiasm, he fell from the car step; but he scrambled to his feet undamaged. He attempted to say "I'm sorry," a customary phrase with him because, throughout the last ten of his fourteen years, he had held the position of little brother to the family's paragon.

His apology never reached his brother. In fact, it never started on its way, for there was not sufficient time to voice it. Sixteen big-hatted, coatless, bow-legged men,

garish with sagging neckerchiefs, adorned with wide cuffs of leather, and clad in ungainly leathern overalls, had already grouped about the visitors—sixteen big-hatted men who, save for distinctiveness of costume, for convexity of legs, and for facial skin that showed tan and the tiny crow-footed puckers of weathering, were apparently in no way different from any other sixteen athletic young men that might be found in any section of America.

One of these big-hatted men had begun to speak. Howls and pistol shots gave place to the quiet tones of a single voice.

Though Bill was oblivious to any analysis of social customs, his brother sensed, to his own surprise, that the affair of making introductions was being conducted with seemingly as much regard for etiquette as prevailed at gatherings in his father's drawing room. Above all, rights to precedence were heeded; and the men were introduced in the order of their rating on the cattle range, first, such as had foreman standing, next, "top" (first-class) riders, then riders of lesser skill, and finally the cook.

The spokesman for the cowboy group had removed a straw from between his lips, and had begun in this wise: "Mr. King? An' Mr. Bill King?"

"I'm Henry Johnson, foreman o' the Tumblin' K. All these boys is o' that outfit. They mostly calls me Pie-face."

After an instant's clearing of his throat, he continued: "By the way, the Ol' Man—beg pardon, I mean Mr. Jim, your uncle—he couldn't make the grade. Sent his regards an' a heap o' messages. Was mashed by a bronc, but'll be O.K. in a week. He's at Cheyenne, gettin' doc-tored; but'll hit the ranch afore you folks strike there,

or right soon arterward. Hurt much? No. Ain't really injured none, jus' generally mashed."

Pieface paused, spat at a pebble, missed it, frowned, and resumed his speaking. "We-all is to chassé a little ways down country, to receive some cows the outfit's buyin' an' that's to be drove to the ranch. Soon as we tallies the cows, I'm to waltz 'crost to Cheyenne an' join the Ol' Man whilst you two gents is to mosey north with the trail herd."

In an aside to Bill, he added: "You'll sure find dust, an' likely some experience." At this, Bill deemed himself to have arrived at the seventh heaven. Why not? Had he not been singled out by a demigod as being the person most worthy to receive a serious prediction?

Next, Pieface stated: "Sorry you two couldn't a-had a decenter welcome. This sage-brush ain't as tony as the Ol' Man's hang-out, the Cheyenne Club. We-all reckoned to meet you in Cheyenne, but all to a sudden the cards got stacked on us. First off, this buyin' o' cows comin' up unexpectedlike, we had to pull down thisa way; an' so we telegraphed the conductor to unload you here, 'stead o' takin' you int' town. An', at the nex' rattle out o' the box, the Ol' Man gets caught in the machinery o' a rollickin' palfrey. But you won't lose out none, acause Tex Smith'll be trail boss, an' he's sure dependable."

Again Pieface cleared his throat and spat at the pebble. Hitting it, he smiled, and then announced: "Step up here, Tex, an' meet Mr. King an' Mr. Bill King."

After Tex had touched his hat brim, given each guest a handshake and said "Pleased to meet you," Pieface resumed his task.

"An' here's Charlie Plummer, our segundo, an' Skinny

Terril an' Sam Evans an' Kansas Ed Smith, all o' 'em top riders."

The hat touchings and handshakings by these last mentioned punchers were somewhat disconcerted by Pieface's interlarding: "An'— Oh! 'scuse me, Jinglebob, for not presentin' you right arter Charlie. Couldn't raise you in the crowd. You's allus hidin', 'cept there's trouble or there's work to be did. This here's Jinglebob, best cow hand, bar none, in our county; an' he gits letters from girls. He'd be segundo o' our outfit, only he won't take it."

In response, Jinglebob diffidently walked into the foreground, properly did his manners to The Duke, accorded Bill the greeting of a twinkling eye and an infectious grin, and promptly thereafter disappeared into the background. This self-effacement was in accord with Jinglebob's muttered comment that "angle worms should be seen and not heard."

Despite the brevity of this first meeting with Jinglebob, Bill even now recollects each detail of it. He remembers a young man who, brown haired, smooth shaven, and with a face saved from handsomeness by the scar from a bronco's hoof, had a figure which, though slightly less than of average height, was so well shaped, so muscular, and so alert that it lent power, as well as grace, to every motion. But still more vividly remembered than all this are eyes and a mouth: brown eyes that, usually dancing, would on occasion assume a piercing gaze like that of an intent eagle; a mouth which, though strong in contour, was playmate ordinarily with an alluring and slowly developing smile and at time with a most contagious chuckle.

Pieface gave a sealing lick lengthwise of the cigarette which his deft fingers had been rolling, plucked an ember from the fire, lighted the cigarette, took one deep inhalation from it, and, with smoke lazily oozing from his mouth and nostrils, proceeded with his introductions.

"An' nex' is Shorty Brown an' Sleepy Joe. Joe's sometimes called Hyena Bob on account his name ain't Bob, an' he bawls like a hyena when he's hungry. All the boys you's met so far is ridin' permanent for the brand; but we's had, for this comin' drive, to hire-on five extry hands. They's all from the Elkhorn outfit. Step up, you Elkhorners, Slim an' Abilene Ike an' Freckles an' Hank an' Buster. They's all peaceable; but don't believe a word they say, for, unlikst our boys, they all rides single-fire saddles an' uses sunburst rowels."

More touchings of hat brims and more handshakings; and then, in the voice of Pieface, "An', comin' back to our regular outfit, this here's Pete, the wrangler; an' last o' all is the food destroyer an' family pizener, Steve Owens, also known, acause o' his job, as Cookey or the Old Woman."

Another aside to Bill, "Mr. Bill, you cotton to the Old Lady. His fryin' pan'll keep the wolf away," was followed by "Now, Folks, seein' I've finished my Daniel Webster, let's us git out o' the kitchen, an' give Owens elbowroom. He'll holler when he's ready."

Thereat Pieface gently linked his arms through those of the two visitors; and, with a fleeting shyness aroused by this social boldness and in tones more intimate than any he yet had used, he blurted out: "Say, Mr. King— Oh, hell! King an' Bill; we's all o' the same outfit, so we might as well unmister. My name's jus' Pieface. Let's vamoose out o' Cookey's road."

The two "pilgrims" and all of their hosts except Owens withdrew a few paces to one side; and, obedient to human instinct, arranged themselves in what roughly was a circle, everybody facing toward its center. For an instant, all remained standing; and then the Westerners, one by one, began sinking to their haunches, to that typical cowboy posture of sitting on the heels while balanced on the toes—a froglike performance, but most comfortable when one is accustomed to it.

George King, alias The Duke, attempted the seemingly easy movement, descended part way, lost his balance, regained it by hopping to one side, and forthwith resumed his standing, his face taking a wry expression as he ruefully massaged the frontal muscles above his knees.

Instantly, and before Bill could attempt the art of squatting, Jinglebob hastened to the chuck wagon, and drew from it two bulging sacks that promised to serve as agreeable seats.

The King brothers correctly guessed his purpose. While the elder of them was waiting for one of the sacks to be brought to him, the younger lunged forward, raced across the very middle of the area that was tacitly forbidden to all except the cook, upset a steaming kettle, sprinkled gravel over meat that was sizzling in a frying pan, and breathlessly entreated: "Jinglebob, give me those. Let me help."

At Bill's words the cook's incipient oath was transmuted into a smile; a tolerant smile, but still a smile. He salvaged what he could from the sodden wreckage which was emerging from the kettle, removed the debris from the dishevelled meat, and resumed his stirring and his tasting.

Jinglebob surrendered one-half his load, and presently he and Bill each deposited a sack upon the circle's rim.

Hardly had the sacks been thus thrown upon the ground, the two Kings found seats upon them, a desultory conversation started, and a spitting contest begun, before Cookey vociferously exclaimed: "Grub pi-i-ile! Come an' get it!"

There was no delay in responding to this call. The circle immediately disintegrated, and its members trooped in the direction of seething pots and pans.

Whether because of instinct or an informing nudge from Jinglebob, Bill dragged his sack with him as he moved. The Duke, however, failed to tow his own ottoman; and, at this, some of the cowboys raised their eyebrows.

Worse still, The Duke, as the migration to the breakfast spot began, removed his overcoat; and, being accustomed to assistance from household servants and Eastern vacation guides, he handed the coat, without comment, to one of the punchers. This puncher promptly laid the coat upon the nearest bush and walked away. The Duke, through absent-minded adherence to his training, had innocently trodden on cowboy pride. He had demanded personal service; and this was something which no cowboys would give upon demand, even though, if unasked, they might yield it often and in wholesale quantity.

Thus the elder of our two tenderfoots already had, as Owens later told him, "twice stepped upon a banana peel in Western courtesy."

The Duke, disconcerted by knowledge that he had blundered and withal a bit bewildered by the novelty of his surroundings, was ransacking his brain for an apology

when he suddenly realized that his companions had reached the breakfast spot, had there equipped themselves with battered plates and cups of tin, that Bill was perched on a sack, that all the Westerners were blithely roosting on their spurs, and that only he himself and Cookey were in an erect position. Ill at ease, he looked at his sack, which was lying in the offing, took one step toward it, hesitated, and inadvertently let his eyes glance around the ring formed by seated Bill and by a lot of human batrachians. The immediate effect was subdued grunts from several of the punchers.

Bill impulsively started to rise in order to act as porter for his brother, but was checked by the pressure of a kindly hand upon his knee. And he heard from somewhere a whispered "Don't."

Pieface, without abandoning his squat, casually remarked in a voice that held a suggestion of frigidity: "Mr. King, you'll find your sofa over yonder where you left it."

The Duke sensed the iciness of tone, and noted that the title of Mister had been reallocated him. Somewhat chastened, he plodded to the trouble-making sack, shouldered it to a gap in the squatting group, dropped it, sat on it, and inquiringly looked at his neighbors, to learn what further rebuff, if any, he was to receive. None seemed to be forthcoming, and so he hopefully concluded that the punchers regarded the incident as closed.

Tex Smith, with entire friendliness of manner save that he also reverted to formality, said: "Mr. King, here's a set o' tools for you." And, with that, Tex delved into the remaining plates and cups beside the camp fire, and from them handed The Duke a supply.

Owens, armed with a frying pan filled with meat, had begun his march within an arc of outstretched plates when Skinny Terril set up the wail: "Epizootic! Where's them swords an' tridents?" Forthwith Cookey laid his frying pan on the ground, retreated to the chuck wagon, and commenced noisily to ferret in the mess box, a shelved cupboard which, permanently attached to the wagon's rear, rose bulkily above it. A few seconds later, he called: "Look out! comin';" and thereat tin spoons, with table knives and three-tined forks of steel, began scudding through the air, to be plucked out of it by extended nimble fingers.

After sheepish glances toward The Duke and Bill, various of the cowboys pocketed the clasp knives they had been using, and furtively wiped their fingers on convenient sage-brush or on their trousers' seats.

Sam Evans deprecatingly suggested: "Anyhow, fingers was invented afore forks." But this was offset by Sleepy Joe's honest confession: "Sam, no use o' bluffin'; we-all tends to eat like hawgs." Sleepy, turning to The Duke, supplemented with: "At the ranch, we behaves oursel's, an' eats decent; but, on the trail, we gets keerless. We grows ashamed, but we comes no nigher 'an it to bein' tidy."

While The Duke understood the meaning of this, Bill went further. He deeply sympathized with it, inasmuch as he himself had but recently graduated from the rigor of daily inspection as to whether or not he had washed behind his ears.

Cookey regained his frying pan, and once more set himself to dispensing food. For a while, conversation ceased, and eating took its place. Cowboys, during meals,

were not disposed to talk; and so, except for a few inelegant expressions such as "Throw your lip over this hunk" and "Pass the slumgullion," nothing was said during several minutes.

In due time, the meal was finished. At its close, each of the punchers carried his table utensils to the camp fire, carefully scraped their contents into the flames, and then deposited the utensils in a rancid pile convenient for Cookey's reach. Bill followed suit. But The Duke, who had laid his soiled ware beside him and was stooping to tie his bootlaces, failed to notice what was happening; and, because untaught, he made no proper disposal of his dirty dishes. Whereat another demerit was chalked against him.

Meanwhile all the Westerners had produced makings from their pockets, makings being the cattle country's term for the paper and tobacco from which a cigarette was hatched. While some of the men busied themselves with rolling cigarettes for their own consumption, others of them proffered their tobacco sacks and paper packets to The Duke and Bill.

Bill shook his head; but The Duke, who was an habitual smoker, accepted one of the loans, and thereupon commenced to crumple tobacco flakes and tissue paper into pulp. He was relieved by Hyena Bob's announcement: "Hol' on. Mebbe you'd sooner have tailormades. Lots in the chuck wagon. The Old Man sent 'em to you. Stay here, an' I'll rustle 'em for you."

Two cowboys cheerfully rummaged in the wagon, and soon produced numberless packages of commercial cigarettes. One of these men volunteered: "'Scuse us for not rememberin' 'em afore. You see, we-all never uses tailor-

mades, acause they comes apart in damp weather or when they's shoved agin' in ridin'. So us folks has to depend on makin's, an' on rollin' our own."

The quest for cigarettes had been waged with so much good humor that The Duke began to wonder whether he had not been mistaken in deeming himself rebuked during the episode of the overcoat and sack. And yet he realized that he had been omitted from the banter which commenced when Bill, naively inquiring of Jinglebob "What makes cowboys heroes?" was smilingly told: "Eatin' beans."

Already Pete had sallied forth on horseback, to "wrangle in" the cavvy, remuda, or saddle band, as a trail outfit's attendant herd of horses was interchangeably termed—or rather to "wrangle in" such of the cavvy's animals as had not throughout the night been anchored by picket ropes. By dint of outdodging such of the cavvy's unpicketed steeds as cannily sought escape, and of shrilly uttered "Yip, Yips" and much picturesque profanity, Pete succeeded quickly in forming in front of himself a procession of some ninety indignant beasts. This procession, urged by Pete, progressed toward camp in peaceful fashion, save that occasionally an impish bronco would heave his heels into his neighbor's ribs, or would sneak behind a bush and try to hide.

Onward the procession came, the unshackled horses in it ambling easily, the hobbled ones lurching as would boats that were breasting a heavy sea. The ninety-odd horses snorted into camp, to find themselves confronted by a long rope that, tied at its middle to the chuck wagon, and at each end held by a standing cowboy, was stretched like a widespread letter "V" horizontally four feet above the

ground. As soon as the forefront of the procession reached this rope, the herded animals stopped of their own accord.

Every one of the beasts had been thrown by a lariat when, in colthood, the creature received its brand. And no horse, if once overturned by a reata, ever forgot the experience or craved its repetition. If the brute was later employed as a saddle animal upon the range, its recollection was kept vivid through seeing other horses crash to earth because they had encountered a loop in a "piece of twine." Hence a single strand of rope would, in the case of saddle horses, suffice for a temporary corral; although, for unbroken steeds and particularly for such of them as had never been toppled by a reata, a barrier of stout logs was needed.

The cavvy being halted behind the meagre fence of rope, and the picketed animals having been freed from their picket pins and led into camp, the cowboys selected the beasts that were to be used during the morning's ride; and, a moment later, these brutes as also the "work horses" that were to draw the chuck wagon had been snared. For the purpose of this snaring, a bridle rein thrown over the horse's neck was, in most instances, sufficient; though some resistant animals, before they would accept their bridle-head and saddle, required the necklace of a gently thrown lariat's loop.

The four horses of the chuck wagon, the so-called work horses, were fed a dash of oats to supplement the wild grasses on which they had foraged through the night, and then were put into their harnesses, and were "hooked up to" the wagon.

Empty grain sacks were handed to The Duke and Bill

in order that the two guests, using these gunny receptacles as "war sacks," might stuff into them whatever "plunder" (extra clothing and other personal effects) they would need during the trip, and thus allow their "coffins" and their "go-easters" or "boughten bags"—in other words, their trunks and leather traveling bags—to be wrapped in canvas, placed in the bottom of the wagon, and thus kept immune from the destructive gnawing of the trail dust.

Nevertheless, The Duke and Bill were for a while diverted from their packing, for Pieface, announcing "Here's your war paint," unexpectedly produced two bundles which disgorged contents of a nature that was joy-giving to tenderfoots. From out of the bundles came two wide-brimmed "Stetsons," two neckerchiefs, two oil-skin slickers, two sets of leather cuffs, two pairs of chaparejos, and two pairs of boots with legs that reached well-nigh to the wearer's knee.

Pieface explained: "They all ought to fit. The Ol' Man selected 'em, an' he knowed your sizes." Then he added: "Didn't send no six-guns. Thought it wiser to store your artillery till you'd reached the ranch."

While The Duke and Bill, having donned the major portion of their new equipment, were stalking to and fro in an effort to overcome the rigidity of unseasoned boots and to acquaint their knees with imprisonment in "chaps," Bill exercised a prerogative of youth and launched a flood of questions as to the whys and wherefores of cowboys' distinctive raiment.

He learned from the answers to his questions that the wide hat brim not only served as sunshade and umbrella but also made the hat a fanner of desired fires, a flail for

extinguishing undesired ones, a bucket for carrying water, and a semaphore for signalling; that the chaps were armor to protect the legs from rain and cold, from assaults by vicious live stock, from collisions with stiff bushes and other unyielding objects, and from fracture when a horse threw its rider or fell upon him; that the neckerchief was looped about the neck, not for sake of picturesqueness, but solely to insure the presence of a mask which could be pulled over the wearer's mouth and nose when dust became intolerable; that the leather cuffs were intended to prevent shirt sleeves from entangling with the saddle horn or a flying lariat; and finally that the boots had valid reason for their queer shape. The boots' height kept water from the wearer's feet, and provided an additional piece of armor for his legs; while the boots' tall and peglike heels had several purposes. They so arched the wearer's instep as to force his legs into a proper fitting with the saddle's curves, and they prevented his feet from slipping through the stirrups when his horse "warped its backbone" and proceeded to "hallelujah 'round the lot."

By this time the packing of the war sacks had been completed, they with the coffins and go-easters had been placed aboard the wagon, hobbles and picket ropes had been removed from all the beasts that had been braceleted at night, saddles and bridle-heads had gone onto all the horses that were to be ridden, the stirrup leathers on the saddles of The Duke and Bill had been adjusted as to length, water had been poured on the last surviving embers of the fire, and Cookey, having finished a homeopathic "washing up" of his utensils, had stowed them in the mess box and had closed its door.

And so Pieface ordered: "Boys, she's set. Let's roll."

The Duke and Bill climbed proudly but somewhat awkwardly onto their broncos; and, doing so, were courteously spared the knowledge that their steeds were of well proved docility and that, throughout the process of their mounting, several punchers had held lariats ready for a toss onto the neck of whichever of the two horses might unexpectedly disclose an intention to "boil over." All this thoughtful superintendence was because the average cowboy could be as womanly and gentle to defenceless people needing his protection as he could be merciless in hazing such persons as, according to the Western code, deserved correction.

No earthquake having developed under either The Duke or Bill, and Cookey having ascended to his driver's bench at the front of the wagon, Pieface and such other punchers as had not already mounted proceeded to "seat themselves in leather."

This was done with considerable speed but with no irregularity of movement that would vex the horse. The mounting puncher grasped the reins, which, hanging from his bronco's mouth, were dragging on the ground. Thereupon he planted himself in front of the left shoulder of his steed; and, facing toward the beast's tail, seized with his right hand the left stirrup, twisted it half-way around, and held it in that position. A mere fraction of a second later his left hand threw the reins backward over the horse's head, pulled them taut, and immediately grabbed either the saddle's horn or the left cheek-piece of the bridle. Coincidentally the left foot went into the stirrup. Instantly thereafter, with the right hand either clutching the saddle horn or else sweeping pendulumlike through

the air, the puncher's body spiralled its way upward and his right foot slid through the U-shaped space between the saddle's horn and cantle. The procedure was imbued with so much ease and grace as to suggest fluidity. The puncher's body seemed to transmute from flesh to liquid and to flow from ground to saddle.

Pieface called to The Duke: "Come on, Mr. King. Let's you an' me head the procesh." A moment later, The Duke found that Pieface was beside him and had gently crowded The Duke's horse toward the proper compass point, that they were in motion, and that a parade was following them. Just behind rode Bill and Tex Smith. Next came the rest of the riders excepting only Pete; and, in these riders' wake, the chuck wagon creaked and thumped upon its springless axles. Behind the chuck wagon ambled the cavvy with its rear guard, Pete the wrangler.

And so, in this ordering, the outfit from the Tumbling K resumed its trek, which had been interrupted in order to absorb two tenderfoot recruits.

CHAPTER II

IN QUEST OF CATTLE

FOR a few moments, despite disorderly chortles from the middle ranks of the column, its forefront maintained a semi-silence.

Bill was too excited to talk. The Duke was speculating as to why the punchers had fluctuated in cordiality to him, although they had been genial toward his brother. Tex Smith was crooning that old-time favorite, "The Lonesome Cowboy," when Pieface began blithely to whistle the ditty, "Roll you tail, and roll her high; we'll all be angels by and by."

This whistling evoked conversation; since, after it had progressed for a bar or two, Tex interrupted with "Shut off your calli-op. I'm wrastlin' with a real song;" and was countered by the retort: "Thought you was garglin' your throat, or givin' a death rattle."

"Speakin' o' rattle," Charlie Plummer exclaimed, "there's a rattler yonder on that rock." He snatched his quirt from its home on his saddle horn, sent his horse into a lope, and headed for the rock. As he passed it, he leaned from his saddle; and, slashing downward, broke the spine of the crawling snake. Immediately he rode back to his victim, dismounted, fished a knife from his pocket, and, prudently keeping one foot pressed upon the snake's head, he took hold of the squirming tail and cut the rattle from it.

Remounting, he trotted across to The Duke, handed him the trophy, and remarked: "Here's somethin' for

your hat band. You're older 'an Bill, so he'll have to wait for hisn."

After The Duke's acknowledgment, Plummer added: "Preciate you thankin' me, but I ain't done nothin'. 'Tain't dangerous like you say it is. 'Tain't nothin' a-tall. You'll be doin' it yourself. But you ought to see a feller pop a snake. I ain't spry enough; but Jinglebob does it easy, for he's lightnin' quick. He'll be glad to pop one for you. Some folks calls it tailin' 'em."

Jinglebob having consented to exhibit his prowess, Freckles announced: "Jinglebob wants a snake to pop. So skin your eyes."

A few rods further and Abilene Ike declared: "Sudden death for Jinglebob. Two beauts over yonder, coiled agin' that busted sage-brush."

Jinglebob, hopping from his saddle and walking toward the snakes, was pelted with such remarks as "Sick 'em, Tige," "Remember, their augers is in front," "Looks pizener 'an Dodge whiskey," "Want flowers on your grave?" "Home papers please copy."

Jinglebob approached the larger of the reptiles; poked his foot at it, to make it strike; and, as it struck, and thereby lost its balance, he kicked it out of its coil. Before the snake could recover its poise, Jinglebob's hand darted forward, caught the retreating tail, and, swinging the reptile through the air, snapped it as though it were a whip lash. One snap and the snake was dead. And then Bill, beset by goose flesh, was allowed to cut off the rattle and so to gain a relic for himself.

Meanwhile Pieface had followed the second snake; and, having teased it into an open spot, he called to The Duke: "Want to kill a music-box? I've got a shillelah

for you." The Duke, despite his qualms, quitted his saddle, to be assured by Pieface: "Don't worry. The siwash can't strike more 'an a third o' his length. Ain't dangerous onless you sits on 'em when they're grouchy, or you tries to pop 'em. Take this club an' hit 'im a wallop." Soon The Duke had a second grisly trinket for his hat.

After such of the riders as had dismounted had regained their saddles, Pieface, with regret in his voice, said to Bill: "Sorry we can't stop for no more fireworks, but we'll copper a snake for your bonnet later. Mebbe there'll be some where we halt for noonin'."

Bill tried to hide his disappointment, but was too artless to accomplish it. However, he was cheered somewhat when Pieface patted him on the back and said: "Sorry, Ol' Man, but we had to keep a rollin' so as to be on time when the herd arrives. You won't lose nothin' by our pushin' on."

The outfit thereupon resumed its march; but its grouping was, for a time, not as symmetrical as it had been. This derangement rose from the fact that each of the Westerners felt called upon to assuage Bill's dejection, slight as this appeared to be.

First, Jinglebob stripped from his own hat band and handed to Bill a silver concha of no mean size. While Jinglebob was characterizing this gift by saying "It's a dofunny for your sombrero," Tex Smith was silently crowding a brass star into Bill's left hand. One by one, punchers spurred forward, flanked Bill's horse for an instant, and then dropped back into their places. During the moments that they were alongside of Bill they each imposed on him a tawdry present. And as several of the

men felt constrained not to slight The Duke, he too received some gewgaws.

While Bill was gloating over his snake rattles and metal stars, playing-card pips, horses' heads, and ballet dancers' legs, and was planning their arrangement on his hat band, Cookey called from the wagon: "Hi, there, Bill! Pete wants to see you behind the remuda. He's ridin' drag, and can't leave. You'll have to drop back to him." So Bill rode back; and, after a short stay with Pete at the rear of the saddle band, returned to his position at the front. But he was ecstatic at the gleanings from his journey, for Pete had presented him with the eyetooth of a murderer, and Cookey had tossed him a gold nugget.

Suddenly Pieface turned to The Duke and Bill and exclaimed: "Gosh! Reckon nobody's had the decency to tell you gents where you're headin'. You'd probably like to know. Mos' folks that's travelin' savvies their destination."

"Not always," interrupted Skinny Terril. "My uncle started for Canyon City an' landed in jail. He thought he knowed, but he didn't. There's a heap o' difference 'tween thinkin' an' knowin'. That's allus the trouble with Hyena."

There instantly was heard the snort of a horse, the chatter of scattering gravel, and the stertorous breathing of a man who was unexpectedly forced to make violent physical effort.

Pieface did not have to turn in his saddle to learn what had occurred. He knew by instinct that Hyena Bob had either prodded his spur into Terril's horse or else, seizing the beast's tail, had jerked it sideways and so almost upset the animal. The labored breathing had been done by

Terril when, jolted half-way out of saddle, he lurched to regain his seat.

"Stop tailin' back there," Pieface ordered. But, before he could renew his conversation with The Duke and Bill, there came another interruption; for Kansas Ed, who was riding immediately behind Hyena, gently tossed a lariat's loop and dragged him backward onto the cantle of the saddle.

After Hyena's horse had ceased its plunging and had overcome its wish to "shoot its back," Sam Evans, who ever since leaving camp had vocally been silent, commenced: "As I've been sayin' all the mornin', Skinny may a-had an uncle that was sent to jail, but I had a father what once was hung for——"

Sam's story was cut short by three musical notes from the chuck wagon. They formed a singing key, because Cookey had a fairly good tenor voice. And then all the Westerners, including even Pete, who was away back there somewhere in the dust, raised their heads and uproariously carolled:

"O bury me not on the lone prai-rie
Where the wild ky-otes will howl o'er me,
In a narrow grave jus' six by three,
O bury me not on the lone prai-rie."

With the final word, which incidentally was prolonged until breath was exhausted, the exuberance vanished; and thereupon, and with a shade of melancholy in his voice, Cookey began in orderly fashion to sing the solo part of the lyric to which belonged the chorus that had been howled with such unseemly gusto.

After each stanza of this solo all the punchers joined

in the chorus, now using tones that carried pathos instead of bumptiousness.

From time to time during the singing the wording of the chorus varied. Although it invariably announced the precise dimensions of the grave, its early reference to the howling "ky-otes" was, in numerous instances, supplanted by equally doleful allusions such as "Where the buzzard waits and the wind blows free," "Where the buffalo paws o'er a prai-rie sea," or "Where the rattlesnakes hiss and the crow flies free."

Even though Cookey had been able to remember all of the thirteen stanzas of the solo, and thereby to pave the way for the final chorus with its lugubrious mention of growling wolves and "roses o'er my grave," he could not have held his songsters to their task beyond the moment when two jackrabbits suddenly rose into view directly ahead of the procession and, one ear up and one ear down, impudently inspected the approaching caravan.

"Hi! Hi!" and "Whoo-pee!" sounded from several throats. The rabbits, dropping to all-fours, zigzagged with dazzling speed about the spot where they had sat; and then, after flirting their hind legs skyward, began side by side to bound lazily in front of the procession and in the very route along which it was traveling.

By common impulse, all the Westerners except Pete and Owens put spurs to their horses and rushed in pursuit. Pete, behind the wagon, had not seen the rabbits; and Owens, on the wagon, had neither spurs nor saddle horse.

Nevertheless, Owens did not remain inactive. In accord with Pieface's exultant shout of "Come on, Duke an' Bill. Come on, Cookey. Whoo-up, whoo-pee!" Owens

took firm grip upon his reins and began to ply his long-lashed whip—began to “pour-in the leather,” as old-time Western teamsters termed it.

Presently the wagon was bouncing along, shedding bed rolls from its stern. The remuda’s horses, losing their accustomed beacon of the wagon’s rear, snorted, plunged, and then scattered themselves here, there, and everywhere. The most of the punchers were as yet riding madly on the trail of the rabbits, which long since had exchanged capers for racing speed and now had disappeared.

And everybody was having keen enjoyment; everybody excepting Pete, who foresaw the task of regathering his scattered cavvy; and The Duke, who, with both hands clasped around his saddle horn, was wondering whether his pony need swerve so violently when approaching badger holes; and Bill, who was extricating himself from the bit of sage-brush into which he had floated from his saddle.

In idiom of cattle land, Woof—for so was Bill’s bronco named—had been, in younger days, a “cutting pony,” and, when thus honorably employed, had proved himself a “whittler.” In other words, by unusual brains, speed, and ability to change direction, he had been a mainstay to puncher riders who were required to “cut” (drive) unruly cattle either into a herd or out of it. Because apt to cling closely to his quarry’s route and because sensitive to the worth of fine gradations in the angles of his dodging, the talented beast was said to whittle.

This particular bronco had been selected for Bill’s use because he had always been kindly and was now supposed to be so aged as not to prove overquick for Bill to mount.

It was with the best of motives that Woof, when the

rabbits dodged, made, first, a "peg," and, next, a "whirl," which is to say, he made an instantaneous stop and then, pivoting on either his front or hind feet, pirouetted, in order to head for a compass point different from the one at which he previously had aimed. As Bill scuttled from the saddle and into the air, Woof scampered away for a jump or two, halted, turned, trotted back to within a few yards from where Bill's feet projected above the shrubbery, and stood immobile, with reins dragging on the ground, head cocked to one side, and an expression of whimsical inquiry on his face. The pony, save for his trembling and a few lusty snorts, registered no opposition to Bill's remounting; but, for a while afterward, refrained from speeding, lest the cargo again be jettisoned.

These events had taken only a few brief moments; and Owens had just begun to call "Whoa," tighten his reins, and apply the brake, when a front wheel of his wagon hit a rock, the lead horses were jerked sideways by the impact, and there was heard the ominous sound of splintering wood.

The wagon slued, toppled to one side, righted itself, and then stopped; but, before it stopped, three of its horses had fallen and now lay in a tangle of broken harnesses.

A second after the mishap, Pieface and four other punchers reached the scene of wreckage. A moment later, The Duke and Bill appeared, breathless, but resolved to do their share in whatever reparatory work was necessary.

Pieface gave an all-embracing glance at the disrupted vehicle and draft animals; and, conceiving that no serious damage had occurred, felt compelled, as foreman, to deliver a reproof. In this he was no hypocrite, he was

merely human. The accident had switched him from prankishness to a sense of responsibility; and so, with a thoroughly human lack of logic, he began: "Hell! Cookey, what'd you think you was doin' a-startin' to chase them rabbits? Don't you know this's a trail outfit?" The reproof went no further, because Owens, from his perch on a prone horse's head, retorted: "Who started the rum-pus, anyhow? You did," while Sam Evans added for good measure: "This ain't no trail outfit. It's an insane asylum, an' you're head patient."

Pieface, brought to earth by these reminders of his own misdoing, replied: "I'm guilty; but, from now on, let's behave oursel's."

Throughout this badinage and for some moments afterward Cookey, Pieface, and the punchers were busied with unfastening buckles, untangling leather, and extricating horses' legs from a mesh of reins and traces.

Soon the three overturned horses were on their feet, and were ascertained to be intact save for a small number of surface cuts. As regards the harnesses, pieces of raw-hide quickly supplanted a few broken straps, an old lariat took the place of a parted trace; and presently, for all practical purposes, the work teams and their accouterments were as serviceable as they had been when starting from the camp.

Not so the wagon tongue. As Jinglebob remarked, it had "a bilious look." Near its front end it showed a gaping crack and suggested wobbliness.

Before The Duke could utter his unsophisticated offer—to fetch a blacksmith, provided he were told where a blacksmith might be found—Tex Smith, who had been testing the fractured timber, vouchsafed: "The corpse 'll

live, if we rustle 'nuff balin' wire to wrap it good. Boys, start gopherin' for wire."

A search through the wagon produced a considerable amount of the desired article, though not a sufficient quantity of it. To The Duke's query, "Where else can we get it?" Tex answered: "Mos' anywheres 'round here. This part o' the West is made mainly o' dust, scenery, balin' wire, an' incompetent foremen." Avoiding the good-natured kick that Pieface launched at him, he added: "Here's a hunk now." With that, he stepped to a neighboring sage-brush and plucked from its top a strand of rusty wire six feet or so in length.

A few rods beyond this sage-brush Shorty Brown came across another strand. The fact that baling wire should so readily be found was not surprising, inasmuch as this particular locality had, for some months, been much traversed by the wagon trains of freighters.

The Duke, heartened by the finds of Tex and Shorty, wandered afield, to see what, if anything, he might unearth. Not far away and near the ashes of a deserted fire he stumbled on two short iron rods and on some fifty feet of telegraph wire that was neatly compressed into a small coil. Holding them aloft, he started for the wagon; and, at the same time, called: "Are these of any use?"

Sam Evans glanced toward The Duke's newly acquired freight and emitted a joyful howl. Then, reducing his noise to words, he answered: "Any use? King, you's got the very medicine the doctor ordered."

To The Duke's surprise, Pieface, Sam, Tex, and Jinglebob ran toward him, Cookey following at a sedater pace, and still other men lumbering in the wake of Cookey. Arriving at where The Duke was standing, Tex took the rods

and wire, gave The Duke a commending slap, and then proceeded with Pieface, Buster, Slim, Jinglebob, and others to make a careful inspection of all the ground in the immediate vicinity.

The Duke's mystification was in no way lessened by any of the comments he overheard: comments such as "Certain, it's Bud; for the tracks show a break in the front nigh hoof, an' the hoof's long an' narrow. That's sure Bud's hoss." "Was alone, for no fresh tracks from any hoss but hisn." "No; he had a pardner somewheres, for there's tools for two." "Bud wasn't camped here. The fire's weeks-old, an' besides there's no sign o' his dismountin'." "Was movin' steady when he passed here, an' straight ahead, an' was trottin', acause them's trottin' tracks." "Sure thing; but he was trottin' slow, for the steps is short, an' the tracks has almost level bottoms an' ain't deep." "Gosh! look at this here over here. The ground's all tore up." "Yep. That's where the hoss whirled." "Look at the length o' his first hop! it's from here clear to Jinglebob." "Look at them tracks beyond it! the hoss had sure begun sinkin' his front feet an' landin' on his toes, jus' naturally a-foggin' it." "Hulloa! here's a sack an' a busted saddle thong. That explains it." "Say, Duke, didn't you find the plunder clos't to where I'm standin' on this gunny sack and thong?"

The Duke answered "Yes;" and, not being offered an explanation by any of the commenting men, he turned to Cookey, who had taken but a desultory part in the searching of the ground, and implored of him: "What's the matter?"

The reply was to the point. "Horse thief or rather cattle thief. What you found were branding irons and telegraph wire to be used in 'blotching' or altering brands

on live stock. I can't read sign well enough to reason out all the story, but in a minute the boys 'll be through their hunt, an' 'll tell you what they've learned."

Suddenly Jinglebob, from some two hundred yards away, signalled to his companions; and, when they had arrived within hearing distance of him, he announced: "Here's where the posse was. They came up that swale, walkin' their hosses. Their tracks shows plain. An' now look at these tracks. Here's when they started to fog it. They jumped from a walk right into a run. We's got the hull story 'cept who the other rustler was that Bud was figurin' to meet up with."

Cookey, on The Duke's behalf, besought a more detailed account. And so Jinglebob reported: "Bud, rigged for a blottin' job with some side pardner we don't savvy, was moseyin' 'long, boun' southeast an' trottin' slow, whens't all to a sudden he seen a posse that was huntin' 'im. The posse was a-comin' straight at 'im from out o' the mouth o' that snaky-shaped swale. When he raised 'em, he didn't stop for no kissin'. He jus' naturally whirled his hoss an' lit out northeast, aimin' likely to hole-up in the Nebrasky sand hills. An' right then the posse seen him, seen that they had jumped him, an' so they hopped along arter him. That hoss Bud's a-ridin's his long hoss; an' that fool posse on flatfoot cayuses has 'bout as much chanc't o' catchin' him as a hen has teeth. Reckon that's all. No, 'tain't. When Bud whirled his hoss, the irons an' wire, what was in this gunny sack an' was tied behin' his saddle, broke the thong holdin' 'em an' fell to the ground. An' 'long comes The Duke an' finds 'em so's we can mend the buggy. That's all. It's got to be, for my breath's gin out."

The Duke asked Jinglebob: "Are you sure they didn't

get him?" and, in answer to this, was told: "Ain't looked that far. Could tell by followin' the trail; but ain't worth while, for it ain't on our range, so we ain't interested. We'll get all the excitement we need out o' repairin' the barouche. Come on, Folks. Let's tackle that spooky wagon tongue."

During the walk back to the wagon Cookey explained to The Duke the illicit uses to which cattle thieves put heated pokers and red hot telegraph wire; supplemented this with the defining of a long horse as a beast that could go great distances at high speed; and ended with the cryptic remark: "Guess your hunt for wire has squared you with the boys."

In due time the break in the wagon tongue was girt with splints consisting of the two branding irons found by The Duke and of two other bits of metal pilfered from an unimportant part of the long-suffering wagon. Then began the process of covering these splints with a tight whipping of the telegraph wire.

The whipping operation had barely commenced before Kansas Ed announced: "Hol' on. Mebbe we ought not to use this stuff. Looks like we might be considered to be liftin' a cache."

Jinglebob paused in his work of pulling wire into tautness and interpolated: "Cache be durned. They was throwed away. They wasn't cached."

After a rapid-fire argument among Ed, Jinglebob, Slim, and Evans had ended without affirmative result, Buster attempted to solve the ethical perplexity by making the jesuitical distinction: "Couldn't be called a cache, 'cause he didn't own 'em. The wire was stole, an' he had no right to tote runnin' irons outside o' his home range."

Buster's argument might have been accepted as conclusive had not Hyena urged: "Dunno. Sounds nice, but a rustler's cache's jus' as good agin' you as anybody's is, 'cept it's on your own range an' put there for purpose o' his gnawin' at your stock. But we sure does need this wire."

At this Jinglebob asserted: "Reckon I'll keep on a-whippin'; an', when you folks quits argufyin', some one help me tie the fastenin'. Logic don't wind no wire."

Jinglebob's dictum won immediate support from Pieface, who declared: "Go on, Jinglebob, an' keep a-windin'. Bud couldn't use them things now, even if he had 'em. He's got to hide-out quiet for a spell, an' we can stake him to a new set o' tools afore he has use for any. So he won't have no real ground for belly-achin'. Anyways, he owes us somethin' for the calves he run off from us last year. I'll guarantee to straighten out with Bud."

Meanwhile Bill had sidled up to Sam Evans; and, in a confiding way, had said to him: "You started to talk about your father that was hung. Won't you tell me about him?" Sam, for an instant, was nonplussed. He repeated inquiringly: "My father that was hung?" and then recollection of his former nonsense flashed through his mind. So he cheerily completed his lie.

"Oh, yes, my father that was hung. Almos' forgot about 'im in the jamboree with the rabbits. Well, that father. I had several of 'em. He was my third or fourth, an' was the lovin' husband o' my sixth mother. They was livin' in a teetotally uninhabited country; an' the neighbors, not likin' the way he was treatin' my mother, broke in an' hung 'im."

This instantly was followed by: "Bill, your face looks

like you thought I was makin' fun o' you. I wasn't. Was jus' a-joshin'."

A moment later he added: "Afore Pieface showed his feller feelin' for them crazy rabbits an' wrecked this baby carriage there was considerable talk 'bout destinations. If the ranch foreman ain't got the manners or intelligence to let trustful folks know where we's headed, I will."

Thus admonished, Pieface took up the recital which had been cut short, first by singing and then by rabbits.

"Gosh! I ain't told you yet. Forgot 'bout it in the jack-pot, an' have kind o' thought the Ol' Man must a-wrote you all the particulars. Didn't he? No? Well, it's thisa way.

"We's bound ont' the plain southwest o' Ogalalla, to receive two bunches o' cattle, throw 'em in together, an' drive 'em to the ranch. One o' the bunches, seventeen hundred cows, is local Colorado stock; the other, fifteen hundred, is trailin' up from Texas an' is due likely tomorrow.

"The whole play's an unusual one. Some folks thinks the Ol' Man's a fool to try it. But this's the way it come about.

"Remember, there's two bunches, one on 'em Colorado an' t'other Texas.

"Describin' the Colorado first, the Ol' Man's had an interest into a lot o' three-year-olds that's been rangin' on the South Platte below here in northeast Colorado. He's cashin'-in on that interest by takin' out o' it, as his share, seventeen hundred head. Them seventeen hundred was to be cut out today by the local boys, an' be held for us agin' our gettin' there. The Ol' Man's been figurin' to move this bunch up to his new range in Montana.

That's all there is to say 'bout the Colorados. Now for the Texas bunch— But reckon, afore tacklin' it, I'll smoke, an' catch my breath."

After a cigarette had been rolled and consumed Pie-face continued: "A feller contracted in Texas to buy a herd, three thousan' cows, mixed stock, for delivery to him at Ogalalla in Nebrasky. This herd was to be trailed up from Texas.

"What do I mean by trailin'? Why, drivin' on the hoof.

"Well, the herd left Texas; an', whilst it was crawlin' north from San Antone, the feller went broke an' knowed he couldn't be able to pay for the cows. So the Ol' Man—that is, your Uncle Jim—along with a ranchman at Cheyenne, took the buyin' contract off the feller's hands an' agreed to split even on the cattle, each purchasin' half of 'em. The new owners sends word down the trail to south o' the Republican River crossin'. They catches the herd there, an' orders it, 'stead o' keepin' straight north to Ogalalla, to throw off an' make a shoot northwest for Cheyenne.

"This'll bring the herd right past where the seventeen hundred Colorados is. Soon as the Texans reach that place they'll stop their herd, cut out the Ol' Man's half, deliver it to us, an' keep on with the balance to Cheyenne. Then, without waitin' for no quarantine, we'll throw together the Ol' Man's half an' his Colorados an' light out hunkydory with 'em for Montana. That's all."

"But," The Duke objected, "we're going to Wyoming, aren't we? Uncle's ranch is there."

The answer gave The Duke his first knowledge of the old-time Westerner's contempt for distance, of the old-

time cattleman's unwillingness to consider mileage as more important than grass. The answer was: "Didn't the Ol' Man write you that you was goin' to Montana? No? Well, I'll be damned! He should a-done it. You thought you was a-goin' to stay on his Wyoming ranch? Shucks! you ain't; you're headed for Montana. The Ol' Man's jus' got a new range up there and is stockin' it. He's reachin' out for more grass than his Wyoming range has got. He'll spend the summer up there in Montana with you 'less he decides to run you over into Oregon, if he goes there to buy cayuses.

"When do we expect the Texas herd? Tomorrow mornin', if Cookey 'll quit his fool efforts to wreck his chariot."

Jinglebob, toiling at the wagon tongue's repair, had barely commenced his cheering news, "Done, an' she's stouter 'an ever," when The Duke sat himself upon a gunny sack that was lying on the ground. An instant later he writhed away from it, clapped his hand against his trousers' seat, and gasped: "Is it a snake?"

Evans, who had seen the misadventure, kicked the sack from its position and announced: "Hell! no; but it hurts more. Lie still an' I'll yank out the thorns." Then he called to Owens: "Hi! Cookey. You'll have lots o' company on the wagon. The Duke's sat on a cactus an' Bill ain't recovered from his spill."

Bill gingerly straightened his bruised joints and indignantly disavowed any suffering, whereat Tex approvingly remarked: "Bully for you, Bill. Stick to leather. The hair o' the dog's your best holt."

So Bill stumped over to his pony, Woof; and, despite clumsiness from stiffening muscles, hoisted himself

aboard. The success of this loading process was assured by the thoughtfulness of Jinglebob, who, throughout the operation, not only held Woof's bit but also crooned to the little horse and rubbed the creature's nose. Nevertheless, by a few tremors and gusty sighs, Woof advertised his lack of confidence in Bill's equitation.

The Duke thought it prudent to follow Evans's advice and "ride the wagon."

As soon as the work horses had been harnessed to the rehabilitated "go cart" it retraced its course sufficiently far to rescue the bed rolls that had fallen overboard during the rabbit chase. Then, with Cookey as driver and The Duke as a passenger beside him, the chuck wagon was once more headed toward its goal. The remuda, which had been reassembled from a dozen different spots, was marshalled behind the wagon, the cowboys mounted and drifted into position, and again the procession was on the move.

Pieface gave the warning: "No nonsense now. We's got to do fifty miles afore we camp, an' our chance o' stoppin' for a noonin' has been shot to pieces by the bust-up. Keep a-rollin'."

The outfit immediately assumed the languor born of facing a slow journey along fifty monotonous miles. The occasional coming of a coyote into view failed, save in the cases of The Duke and Bill, to awake excitement. Even the unexpected appearance of a stray band of antelope produced scant enthusiasm. Recollection of the wagon tongue and appreciation of the need for promptly reaching camp were each deterrent to hilarity.

The outfit clung, for the most part, to the grouping which it had taken when starting in the morning; riders

in the lead, then the wagon, and last of all the cavvy with the wrangler following it.

Now and again a man would leave the front of the column, drop back to the cavvy, and from it obtain a fresh horse in substitution for the animal he had been riding. These stays at the cavvy were none of them lengthy, inasmuch as the post was a dusty one, and also Pete, who was in charge of it, wished not to be diverted from his scrutiny of the horses he was herding. Pete realized that, within a day or two, all the punchers except himself would be monopolized by the cattle they now were seeking; and that on him alone would rest the responsibility of insuring that the remuda, each day, would travel behind the marching cattle and, each night, would arrive intact in camp. Accordingly he now was scrutinizing each of the horses that trudged in front of him, his mind ever trying to record the beast's untoward peculiarities such as slothfulness in travel, liking to haze neighbors, and desire to escape. A remuda was kept in orderliness by the brains of its wrangler, rather than by the speed of the horse on which he rode.

And so, hour after hour, the outfit plodded across the plain; the punchers, bored by inactivity, soon lapsing into silence and only Cookey, Bill, and The Duke being disposed to talk.



The outfit clung, for the most part, to the grouping which it had taken when starting in the morning.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST ATTAINS ITS GOAL

As soon as The Duke had placed himself beside Cookey on the wagon seat, Cookey opened a conversation that remained brisk till the uneventfulness of the journey made sleepiness stronger than curiosity.

Cookey began this chat by saying, to The Duke's vast surprise: "How are things going at college? I'm out of touch. Haven't been back for four years."

The Duke, wholly ignorant of Owens's history, innocently answered: "Goodness! I never expected to find anybody away out here, except Uncle Jim, who knew anything about the college, or, in fact, about any college. Did you use to live in the village?"

He was unprepared for the reply, which ran: "No, in Philadelphia; but I understand you're occupying the same rooms that your Uncle Jim and I shared till the end of sophomore year." Ignoring The Duke's gasp, Owens went on: "You know, of course, that the summer following his sophomore year—it was six years ago—your Uncle Jim became engaged to one of his cousins, and that this sent Jim's father on the warpath. Though the old gentleman had no objection to the girl—in fact, was quite fond of her—he made sneering comments about puppy love. In the flare-up, Jim so completely lost his temper that he cut loose from his father and chucked college. Then he came West and started ranching with some money his grandmother had left him. He'd expected to marry as soon as the ranch was paying, but the girl died.

Jim's never forgiven his father. That's why he never goes back to the states. He's not the only man who's come West because of a love affair in the East, and the range is dotted with Englishmen who left England for the same sort of a reason."

The Duke, who had known something of his uncle's misadventure, made a few trite remarks of sympathy and then queried: "If it isn't too impertinent, how do you happen to be away out here with Uncle Jim?"

Cookey answered: "No impertinence at all. My story's much like his, though with no girl in it. My dad was dissatisfied—he had a right to be—with the quantity of studying I did after first term freshman year, read the riot act to me, and told me he'd disinherit me unless I graduated. So I started to bone reasonably hard, and kept it up till Jim's impromptu leaving got on my nerves. At the next midyear exams I flunked all four ways from the ace. As soon as the dean saw my papers he sent me word to meet him at the back gate; and, as I reached it, he shoved me through the opening, slammed the gate behind me, locked it on the inside, poked his head over the fence, and shouted 'Keno!' I didn't dare to face Dad, so I turned my furniture and extra clothing into cash, bought a railway ticket to the West, and telegraphed Jim that I was following his trail. He met me at his railroad station, and so here I am."

The Duke, emboldened by the suddenly discovered family intimacy with Owens, pursued his catechising. Owens readily gave answers which, as consolidated, ran as follows: "Do I want to go back? Not by a jugful; at least, not to live. No Westerner ever wants to go back. This is God's country where we are now. I've been back

twice on short visits. Made up with Dad before he died. Did me a lot of good sentimentally; but financially it was a foundered horse, because Dad had been speculating in real estate and had lost his shirt, including all its buttons."

A few puffs at a cigarette, and then: "Why am I cooking? For the simple reason that it's my present job. I'm not a ranch owner, since I haven't got the necessary amount of capital. And I'm not a cowboy, because I haven't sufficient instinct or knowledge about the management of live stock, and also I don't ride well enough. A top cowboy's born, not made. To be sure of constant employment, a puncher needs more than mere ability to stay glued to the back of a pitching cayuse. He needs intuition and generalship. He must sense instinctively and at lightning speed just what all the animals in his care are planning to do next, and he must be able, most of the time, to outmaneuver them. Any horseman can chase a stampede, but it takes real men to prevent one or properly to handle it after it's begun.

"There are men, a good many of them, who make their entire living out of ability to sit anything that bucks, but such of them as lack the qualities of intuition and generalship that I've talked about can't be sure of first-class jobs except during the horse-breaking season, when they find employment on the little ranches. These men who make their entire living out of sitting on volcanoes—they're called contract busters or flash riders—they mosey from ranch to ranch; and, getting ten dollars for each horse they gentle, they'll fork any animal that wears hoofs. They find work at the little ranches mostly, for the big ranches usually have top riders enough to do all the gentling that the ranch needs."

A question by The Duke, and then: "What do I mean by gentling? It's breaking; means the same thing that breaking does back East, but with this difference. Back East, all horses are trained by more or less kindly methods; and so, in the East when you hear a horse is broken, you expect him to be a fairly decent citizen. Out here, the ranches vary greatly in their modes of gentling. Some ranches use kindness, and so produce horses that, with due allowance for their innate pepperiness, are as docile as the brutes you see ridden or driven in the East. However, other ranches slap a saddle onto a bronc, set a man on top of it, see two or three minutes of delirium tremens, and then sell something that's warranted to be sound and gentle. It's sound enough; but, at best, it's about as gentle as a jack-in-the-box with the lid closed and a weak hook holding it."

In answer to further questioning by The Duke: "No, I'm not the regular cook. He's at the ranch, the Wyoming ranch. Stays there all the time, for he's not husky enough for trail work. But Oxford—that's what we call him—will move to the new ranch in Montana when your Uncle Jim goes up there. I've been a sort of odd-job man, rustling wood, wrangling, teaming, and doing any old thing. Don't know what I'll stack up against at the Montana ranch, but there'll be something to keep me busy."

The conversation now shifted its theme, inasmuch as Bill, on Jinglebob's advice, proceeded to take a vacation from the saddle and to rest himself by temporarily "riding the wagon." The moment he reached the wagon seat he enthusiastically declared: "Gee! but it's fun. Everything's great."

Indeed, everything was great. The vast plain stretched to the horizon and flowed over it, whether before the wagon, behind it, or on either side; a plain relieved from commonplaceness by the pleasing contours of its gently undulating surface and by the subtle coloration of its sagebrush and its soil; a plain as yet undisfigured by fence or house. It was permeated with the quality of loneliness since, barring the men and horses in his own caravan, Bill, from his vantage point on the wagon seat, could see, hour after hour, no living thing except occasional bunches of nomad live stock, a distant eagle that floated specklike in the sky, and infrequent flashes of brown or white which advertised that a nearby bird or rabbit was darting for cover, a more distant coyote was slinking through the sagebrush, or a far-off antelope had raised his white-lined tail, his speed signal, and was emulating an arrow's swiftness.

The dignity of the plain was accentuated by white wedges that rose however slightly from behind the western horizon. A closer approach to these glistening cusps would the better have disclosed their character. They were the summits of the mountains that, surging arrogantly from the Coloradan prairie, formed the snow-crowned titanic wall which, in later years, was to give the city of Denver a worldwide reputation.

And so Bill, coming under the spell, again announced: "Gee! it's great." Without realizing that he was studying anything, he was in fact investigating one phase of the old-time cowboy's life, its isolation.

This life was assuredly a lonesome one. Save for two short delirious holidays passed each year in cow towns, and save for such period, if any, as he formed a member of the party escorting a trail herd on its trudging journey,

the average puncher was, by the very nature of his vocation, doomed to spend his time in semi-exile. He was forced to this by the fact that the roving horses and cattle he tended were so unsocial as to shun districts that man frequented. During his segregation, the cowboy might be quartered in the bunk house at his ranch. If so, he would have the company of the few other men upon this ranch, and also would see occasional visitors.

Or he might be stationed at an outpost cabin, a so-called line camp. In this latter event, he might be so fortunate as to have a second cowboy assigned to share with him, not only in the maintenance of the line camp and its watchful duties, but also in the devotion of otherwise tedious evening hours to the interchange of mutually familiar stories and to endless, inconclusive debates upon the merits or demerits of the various types of spurs, saddles, and other accouterments that were used upon the range.

Or our cowboy might be ordered to solitary patrol. In any sort of weather, with no companion save his horse, no shelter day or night except his slicker, he would be compelled to spend days if not weeks in "riding sign" and in other outridings; all to keep his employer's live stock within bounds and to ward off despoilers of the ranch, despoilers such as prairie fires, predatory animals, marauding Indians, trespassing rustlers or sheepmen, or merely farmers intent on homesteading.

Yes, even the sheepmen and the homesteading farmers were regarded as despoilers. The sheepmen's flocks, unlike the herds of horses and of cattle, nibbled the grass so closely that it died, and with their hoofs chopped the few remaining grass roots into lifeless shreds. However luxuriant the herbage that they entered, the wooly flocks

left a desert in their wake. Range cattle hated the sheep with a virile hatred, and often would stampede at sight or scent of them.

The homesteading farmer had the prudent, if unneighborly, habit of selecting lands that contained springs and water holes, of procuring, under the federal homestead law, a legal title to them, and then of skirting them with a wire fence. The ranchmen's live stock that previously had used these springs and water holes had now to find new drinking places, for few ranchmen owned the land on which their live stock ranged. They merely "squatted" on it, and more or less anxiously awaited the time when they would be ousted.

After Bill had several further times shown his appreciation of objects in the landscape by remarking "Gee! it's great," he betook himself to interrogating Cookey. First and foremost, Bill must be advised immediately as to which of the attendant cowboys had scalped Indians and slain train robbers.

The homicidal catalogue that Cookey furnished was disappointing to Bill, because of its briefness and its lack of gore. The inventory contained no mention of any scalp; listed a few defensive shots that had been fired when five of the punchers were serving in a military pack train during the Sioux uprising of 1876, a few bullets that had been loosed to warn rustlers, rather than to kill them; and then closed with the averment that punchers, as a class, were no more bloodthirsty than the average Eastern high school boy.

True, an occasional puncher murdered, or tried to murder, a fellow man; but such instances were extremely rare. True, a puncher would take part in the execution

of a person whom frontier justice, acting through a vigilance committee, had convicted of a capital offence and had condemned to death. But the frontier's vigilance committee and its cowboy hangmen represented the nearest approach to orderly administration of justice that could be attained in a country too sparsely settled to support a sufficient number of formal courts of law.

That Jinglebob and Tex had each aided in fulfilling the lethal commands of a vigilance committee was a fact which Cookey thought unnecessary to impart to Bill. And so Bill, chagrined at discovery of his companions' decency, was preparing to revamp his mental attitude toward all cowboys. But his earlier faith was restored through Cookey's announcement: "By the way, the boys heard last night that Bonney, the fellow they call Billy the Kid, killed twenty-one instead of only nineteen."

When, in answer to The Duke's query, "Twenty-one what?" Cookey said "men," Bill's optimism was restored. He listened with rapt attention as Cookey not only described the appalling life of Bonney but also unreeled the sanguinary biographies of Boone Helm, Henry Plummer, George Shears, Bignose George, Opium Bob, and various other infamous Westerners.

Bill was vastly pleased by Cookey's assertion "And that's not the whole list of bad men by any means;" yet, a moment later, he was again discouraged because Cookey added: "But there never have been, relatively speaking, many bad men on the cattle range at any time. The boys didn't like to have 'em around. They sort of made people nervous. 'So long as they limited their killings to greasers, half breeds and each other, the boys were content not to interfere and to let them run up as big murder

scores as they liked within reason, were content to let dog eat dog. But, as soon as a bad man killed or robbed anybody that was decent, that bad man was sure in for trouble. He knew that, unless he could hop into Mexico, he would have only a few days to live; for the boys would track him down and either shoot him full of windows or else use him to trim a tree.

"Not many of the bad men came from the cowboys' ranks. Most of them were graduates of penitentiaries, city slums, and the 'bummer' contingents of the armies in the Civil War; and many of them plainly were insane folks. The cowboys, as a class, have always been decent. They may occasionally be rough in their horseplay with each other, they may occasionally be equally rough to an irritating tenderfoot; but, in the main, they're a darned sight gentler to tenderfoots than the sophomores back at college were to our class in its freshman year. Almost all the talk you hear about cowboys shooting at the feet of tenderfoots to make 'em dance is buncombe, and nothing else."

Presently conversation lagged. Cookey's garrulity gave place to silent lethargy, and even Bill was soon thereafter so victimized by drowsiness as not to notice an angry whirl that suddenly rose from beside the trail, a whirl which toned midway between the sound of a locust and the noise made by an electric buzzer that is impatiently and unevenly pressed. This cost Bill the chance of obtaining an additional rattle for his hat band.

Hour after hour the expedition moved indolently onward, stopping occasionally to "breathe" the horses, and a moment later resuming its torpid course.

During all save the later hours of the day there had

been seen much of grazing live stock, though the animals always were in isolated lots and were widely scattered; as, for instance, at this point a solitary steer; at that point a broad patch of emptiness; then three or four cows and calves together; and far beyond, a tiny band of horses. This was because the wild grasses that furnished the live stock's fodder were so meagre in this locality, as throughout most of the old-time range, that a square mile of land could harbor but sixty animals.

In the later hours of the day the grazing animals grew gradually less frequent and eventually ceased to show at all. During the morning a round-up crew had swept the region clean of its four-legged occupants, had driven them to the holding spot for which our cavalcade was headed, and was there imprisoning all save a few within a straggling but effective fence composed of mounted cowboys.

Suddenly from the front of the column Pieface called: "Whoo-pee! wake up, I've 'raised' the Colorado bunch. The boys is holdin' 'em where I told 'em." Then, riding to a position near the wheel horses of the wagon, and addressing the two tenderfoots, he added: "Hulloa! Kingses, see that brown patch that's away down the flat, a little west o' south from here? That's the Colorado part o' the stock we're after. We'll swing 'crost now to that point o' timber yonder on the river an' make camp."

Just then there came beside the wagon Jinglebob, who was leading Bill's horse and who suggested ingratiatingly: "Bill, it's only a mile an' a half to camp if you's horse-back an' takes the short cut. You'd better go in on leather 'stead o' that groanin' cart." So Bill deserted the chuck wagon and mounted Woof.

So soon as Bill was a horse he and Jinglebob headed

straight across country for the site of the prospective camp. They had advanced barely beyond earshot from the wagon when, from out of a shallow coulée, there trotted a cow and calf. Jinglebob glanced at the cow's brand, muttered "Ain't ourn, she's a Diamond Five," and then a look of inspiration suffused his face. Stifling a chuckle that was endeavoring to escape, he suggested: "See that cow an' calf? If you'd like to do somethin' the boys'd sure appreciate, herd them animals into camp. I've got to leave you an' waltz 'crost the river for a spell. If anybody jaws you for drivin' them animals, say I tol' you to do it."

Jinglebob failed to impart the information that the herding of a "long horn" cow and calf, when they were unaccompanied by other cattle, was the most thankless task that could be imposed on any puncher. The cow and her attendant calf, so long as thus apart from friends, would dodge here, there, and everywhere; would do nothing that they ought to do, everything that they ought not to do.

Jinglebob failed also to mention that he himself, despite his statement to the contrary, was not to cross the river; but instead would sneak along its bank and, from behind a screen of brush, would keep a protective eye on Bill.

Nor did Jinglebob disclose that the basic motive for sending Bill upon an unaccomplishable errand was to restore Bill's confidence in riding and to re-establish him in the estimate of Woof. Cow ponies—which is to say, ponies ridden during round-ups or while the man atop them was engaged in the exacting tasks of roping and of forming, trimming or driving herds—were of so much intelligence and of such intensive training as to anticipate

every movement that their riders ought to make. Coupled with this alertness was a sensitiveness of nerves that resented any impropriety in the rider's horsemanship. If a cow pony lost faith in its rider it would skimp its speed, dull the angles and rapidity of its dodging, and even be negligent as regards the avoidance of gopher holes and other hazards. Wherefore Jinglebob deemed it important that Bill and Woof should resume amicable relations.

Jinglebob disappeared upon his alleged mission and Bill manfully embarked upon the task of guiding the cow and calf. Within half a minute he discovered that the cow and calf were fully as erratic in their course as had been the rabbits of the morning. They promptly demonstrated to Bill the utter falsity of two tenets which his school teachers had assured him were inviolate and axiomatic—that two bodies could not occupy the same space at the same time, and that a single body could not be in two places at the same moment.

Thanks to Jinglebob's instruction, Bill was now giving Woof his head, making no effort to check or guide the horse, but devoting all energies to staying in the saddle. Woof began to have a delightful time. A well trained cow pony derived intense pleasure from competitive dodging with live stock that was essaying to outwit or, as Westerners said, outfox him. So Woof, ignoring Bill's ungainly sways and frantic clutches at the saddle horn, gleefully continued in his game of tag.

Bill's faith had so far returned that he was starting to enjoy himself when two men appeared from behind a tall clump of sage-brush and galloped toward him. As they neared him one of the men angrily called: "Hi, there! Stranger, what in hell you doin' to them cattle?"

No oil was apparently poured on troubled waters by

Bill's naive answer, "Driving 'em to camp," for the man fairly snorted in reply: "Drivin' 'em to camp? Who the blazes do you think you are, Queen Victoria? Them's my cows, belongs to the Diamon' Five Ranch, an' I'm its foreman."

"But," said Bill in a scared tone, "Jinglebob told me——"

He got no further than this because the man, changing ferocity for a friendly grin, asked: "Jinglebob? You mean Jinglebob o' the Tumblin' K?" Bill hesitatingly answered "Yes." Both men threw back their heads and laughed till tears came. Then they removed their hats, and, crowding close to Bill, extended their right hands—their gun hands—to him, and warmly shook his hand.

The man who previously had spoken said: "'Scuse my laughin'. Didn't mean no disrespect. I'm Henry Adams an', as I've said, foreman o' the Diamon' Five. This here's Joe Ortezt, one o' our riders. Is generally called Mexican Joe."

While Ortezt was giving his handshake and his apology for disconcerting merriment, Adams went on: "You must be one o' the pilgrim nephews o' Jim King. Yes? Heard you was a-comin' out. You's sure got an honest to God uncle. As long as you's his kin you can steal every derved cow we's got an' nothin' 'll be said 'bout it. But don't you trust Jinglebob. He's unsafe for any confidin' person. O' the three biggest liars on the cattle range, I'm one an' he's the other two."

Instantly Bill flared in defence of Jinglebob. Whereat Adams smiled almost gratefully at him and then said: "Thank you, Son. Glad you like the onery cuss. Kind o' fond o' him, myself. He's my twin brother."

Ortezt now queried: "You spik of camp? Adams and

I don't sabe where it ees. We have been in the brush hunting for estrays, so we did not see your outfeet pass. Where ees your camp, and what boys in the outfeet?"

Bill pointed to the clump of trees into which the chuck wagon was just now entering, and then he rattled off a list of names that began with Pieface and ended with Pete. He added at the list's conclusion: "I don't know Pete's last name. He's Pete, the wrangler." To this Ortez replied: "Bueno! His las' name's Ortez, same ez mine. He's my what you call distant couseen, an' a damn nice boy. Adams, let's dreeft over with this gent and get the news."

And so Bill, flanked on either side by a new acquaintance, started for the camp.

As they came within hailing distance of it Adams gave a lusty call, then immediately apologized to Bill for doing so. "Beg pardon. Forgot you was o' the outfit. You see, whenever visitors comes up to a camp an' ain't accompanied by nobody from it, they's expected to hail it afore they gets within pistol distance." Then, in reply to a question by Bill: "No. Failin' to hail don't commonly mean no shootin' offence. Jus' shows the visitor's short on good manners an' ain't housebroke."

Bill spied Jinglebob at his task of aiding Cookey to unload the wagon; and was surprised that Jinglebob, despite his usual quick perception, had seemingly failed to notice the advent of the three horsemen. In this assumption Bill was mistaken. Jinglebob had seen them from the very opening of the chase after the cow and calf, and now was busied with what he termed "a mess o' rapid thinkin'."

Not until Charlie Plummer, after saluting the two guests, had announced "Hi! Jinglebob, look what the cat's

brought in," did Jinglebob evince any recognition of the presence of his brother and the latter's Mexican companion.

Recognition took, at the outset, a form which momentarily caused alarm to Bill, inasmuch as he had not as yet been able wholly to banish from his mind the vague idea that cowboys and assassination were inseparable.

Bill's alarm began when Jinglebob, giving a swift glance at his brother's face, threw his hands behind his back, tugged there at the buckle on the belt of his chaparejos, dropped to the ground, and, with feverish haste, commenced to drag his chaparejos from his legs.

Bill's thought had been that Jinglebob was reaching for his gun in order to defend himself from mortal danger. Accordingly, with tense nerves, Bill concentrated his attention upon Jinglebob. Suddenly he realized that no weapon had materialized, that Jinglebob's brother and several other punchers were madly tearing off their chaps, and that the air was filled with joyous catcalls and good-natured taunts. His instinct sensed that the affair held a familiar note, but for a few seconds he could not identify it. He stood puzzling at what he saw and heard, and then comprehension flashed into his mind.

Henry Adams, having succeeded in removing his chaps, was waving them about his head and running toward the seated Jinglebob. "Dern you, Jinglebob," said he, "think you can haze your pilgrim on my cows, do you? Take that." Immediately the chaps thudded upon poor Jinglebob, defenceless on the ground—defenceless because the fur on one leg of his chaps was tangled in the rowels of his spurs.

That very instant Bill fully comprehended. He was

witnessing a cowboys' chap fight, that skin-abrading, bruise-producing big brother of the pillow fight in the dormitory of a boarding school. The present writer, after laming experience in both types of contest, confidently asserts that a feather bolster, although sopping wet and swung by the strongest boy in school, offers no more than a caress when compared with the blow from chaps that sport not only a heavy buckle but also sharp-edged conchas. No disrespect to the great state of Texas is intended by the averment that her heraldic star, when backed by heavy leather and vigorously impacted against the tautened seat of trousers, is astonishingly painful.

For a moment after Jinglebob was struck various chapswinging members of the Tumbling K outfit rallied to his aid and joined in an assault on Henry Adams. Then one of them tripped and fell. Instantly the whole pack, with that savage impulse which governs tigers, wolves, and all youthful males of the human race, pounced on him. Even Jinglebob, having freed himself from his own entanglement, showed no gallantry to the prone unfortunate who earlier had been one of his defenders but assisted in belaboring this prostrate and howling victim.

The rioting ceased abruptly at the cry: "Trail herd comin'." Far off toward the southeastern horizon a faint column of dust had showed itself. The skylarkers instantly redonned their chaps and resumed serious pursuits.

Cookey and Jinglebob returned to unloading the wagon. Meanwhile, three enterprising punchers had ridden to the river's brink, dropped lariat nooses over the ends of logs that projected from piles of driftwood, and, after snubbing the home ends of these lariats to saddle horns, were snaking the logs into camp. This signified a courtesy to

Owens inasmuch as, according to range customs, the cook in every cow camp was responsible for the procuring of the firewood, although the wrangler ordinarily did the actual gathering of it. A cook, unless he knew himself to be vastly popular, thought twice before he requested a top rider to do menial work.

A few blows of an axe and the cook fire was ready for lighting. A match, broken from the end of its comb-shaped card and drawn across a trousers' seat, produced an unpleasing odor and then reluctantly a flame that, touched to the wood of the cook fire, caused it to snap and smoke and to be expectantly and affectionately regarded by hungry men. Bill filled various pots and pails with water at the river, and, slopping a portion of their contents overboard at every step he took, manfully lugged them to the blaze. So kindly was the appreciation of his willingness that, when he clumsily deluged half the fire into sodden inactivity, the cowboys swore at the fire and not at him. Soon Owens swung into full stride in his task; and, pursuant to his impolite commands, the vicinity of the fire was left to his exclusive use.

For The Duke and Bill there was no duty except to wait avidly till supper should be cooked. Their horses had already been unsaddled, hobbled, and turned loose. Their bed rolls had been handed them; and, in a dozen different locations, they had unfolded, spread, furled, and again unfolded and spread the contents of these bed rolls. The process was not complicated, because each bed roll consisted of merely a pair of blankets and a square of light-weight canvas. This square of canvas, the so-called tarpaulin, tarpoleon or tarp, was, except for an oilskin slicker, the only protection the sleeping cowboy had against

damp ground and falling rain or snow. Such luxury as a tent was unknown in the old-time cow camp.

To The Duke's regret and Bill's delight, these two pilgrims, at the very outset of their ranching life, were reduced to the same austerity of bedding that the cowboy perforce endured; this for the reason that, as Jinglebob announced: "Your chicken-skin goose-hair pillows has got locoed in the long sweetenin' an' the axle grease." Two feather pillows had thoughtfully been provided by the pilgrims' uncle; but, during the disheveling chase after the jackrabbits, a molasses jug had lost its cork, an axle grease keg its cover, and each of these uncapped receptacles had thereupon spewed its contents into the absorbent masses of the pillows. Tex, gingerly holding one of the damaged cushions by a corner, threw it high in the air and toward the river; no doubt expecting, by a succession of like tosses, to lodge it in the water where it might lose part of its foulness. But, just before it reached the zenith of its flight, a shot from Sam Evans's six-gun and a spurt of feathers offered irresistible invitation. Bang! bang! bang! and a limp ticking fell to the ground, a cometlike tail of white floated leeward on the breeze. Upward went the second pillow, to be converted into rag and drifting fuzz.

Immediately before the waging of the chap fight Pie-face and Tex had mounted fresh horses from the remuda and had hurried over to interview the men who were holding the bunch of Coloradan cattle that was destined for our outfit. The two emissaries found, to their satisfaction, that Tumbling K had been fairly treated in the division of the original herd and that the animals allotted to it were in good condition for marching on the trail.

By dint of cajolery and still more by promise of some of the small quantity of whiskey which Pieface had placed in the chuck wagon for the purpose of having at hand an aid to bargaining, Tex obtained from the holding punchers a consent to continue their guardianship till morning and thus to spare all of the Tumbling K's men from nightherd duty in connection with the Coloradan cattle.

As soon as the bargain had been driven Pieface and Tex began the return to their own camp, taking with them, as their guests, as many of the Coloradan cowboys as were not needed to impound the herd.

Just as this group of seven or eight horsemen ambled into the camp of the Tumbling K a lone rider hailed the camp from the southeast. To this hail Pieface cheerily responded: "Come in, Stranger," and then added: "Light, Stranger, light."

Upon Pieface's completing his invitation the visitor trotted into camp; punctiliously swerved his steed so that, when dismounting, he should not be screened by the beast from any of the camp's inmates; threw his right leg over the saddle horn, and slid to the earth. The bridle reins dropped to the ground and coincidentally the horse shook itself, sagged its head, shut its eyes, and gave the appearance of being asleep.

Pieface and Tex instantly stepped toward the visitor and held out their right hands as he extended his. A quick touch of hat brims and two quick handshakes were accompanied by a staccato conversation. Pursuant to custom, the newcomer was the first to disclose his identity. His "Howdy, I'm Jed Brown o' the Goodnight outfit with a trail herd for the Tumblin' K an' Sturgis ranches," while necessary to satisfy range usage, was, for practical

purposes, quite needless. His nag bore the Goodnight brand, his accouterments were studded with Texan stars, he was covered with the dust from a trail herd; and, as he fully realized, he was known by sight to half the riders present.

Equally necessary to satisfy range etiquette and, for practical purposes, equally needless was Pieface's rejoinder: "This here's the Tumblin' K. I'm Pieface Johnson, foreman at the ranch, an' these here's Tex Smith an' Charlie Plummer, trail boss an' segundo on the comin' drive." It was thus needless inasmuch as the camp was flanked by grazing cayuses each of which carried on its hip an inburned scar in the form of a letter "k" that was leaning to one side.

Because this letter was leaning it was styled "tumbling." Had it stood erect it would have been termed, if small in size, merely "k;" but if of large size and a capital letter, then "big k;" and had it lain on its back it would have been known as "lazy k."

But to return to Pieface. "Afore we talks business," he continued, "shake hands with Mr. King an' Mr. Bill King, nephews o' our Ol' Man. They come from back East this mornin'." Then, with an all-embracing gesture, "These others is the balance o' our outfit an' likewise some local boys. Now for business. Jus' how far off's the rest o' your democrats? Soon as they blows in, you-all best eat with us, an' give your Ol' Woman a rest from cookin'."

On learning that the trail herd would arrive within an hour, Pieface ordered Cookey to "put your best foot in the soup. There'll be company to feed; the whole Texas outfit, an' these here local gents as well that's with us."

Next, Pieface volunteered to send a message of instructions to the men accompanying the herd, provided

Brown would be content to remain in camp. On Brown's acceptance of the offer, Jinglebob was despatched with word to Brown's segundo that the advancing cattle, after being watered at the river, should be "thrown off" the route so far as to leave a wide interval between them and the already impounded bunch of Coloradan beasts. Because only half of the animals in the Texan herd were to become the property of the Tumbling K, it would unduly slow proceedings on the ensuing morning if the entire herd and the Coloradan cattle were now allowed to merge.

Jinglebob carried also advices that, as soon as the Texan punchers had watered their animals and installed them on a "bed ground," these punchers with their cook and wrangler would find a meal awaiting them in the camp of Tumbling K.

There was no need for Pieface to bargain as to the nightherding of the Texan herd. Since no portion of it was to be delivered till the morrow, the Texans would have to guard the whole of it throughout the night.

Ultimately, however, there would be one thing for which to negotiate, namely, the herd's lead steer; though this negotiation would be had, not with the Texans, but with whoever should presently arrive and disclose himself to be the representative for Uncle Jim's partner in the transaction of accepting delivery of the herd. This "rep," as cow-land ever styled a ranchman's representative, had not as yet appeared in camp, so there was opportunity to win the favor of the Texans before the allotment of the lead steer should come up for decision,—and this was worth winning, seeing that the "rep" might prove selfish in the dividing of the herd between his principal and Uncle Jim.

As the opening move in the campaign for alliance with

the Texans, Pieface, affecting innocence, asked Brown: "Your lead steer bein' the critter that you say, do you reckon your boys'd be offended if we rustled 'em a little coffin varnish when they rolls in?" Wily Pieface, with his small stock of intoxicant brought for the purpose, had purchased nightherding from the Coloradans, was now essaying to buy the good will of the Texans, and, in due course, would try to effect a mild seduction of the "rep."

Because the cattle with which the old-time cowboy dealt were semi-savage animals, the lead steer upon any trail drive was a factor of importance. If this beast possessed a dominating nature, sanity, courage, bodily vigor, and a relish for fast walking, the punchers who were associated with the drive obtained an invaluable ally. At the beginning of every drive the cowboys had to convert a lawless tangle of milling cattle into a more or less orderly marching column. The moment after this column swung into its march the cattle within the column began automatically to choose their positions in it. And, once the positions had been chosen, they would cling to them day after day throughout the journey.

At the head of the column would stride the lead steer. Following this imperious brute came the animals of somewhat lesser mettle, behind them the beasts of merely average vigor, and finally the so-called "drag" or "tail." This drag, as it was more commonly styled, represented both a hospital and a home for incompetents. It held the footsore, the ill, the infants, the weary, and the lazy.

Many a lead steer, pre-empting the frontal place during the first day of a northward drive from the Mexican border, uninterruptedly held this place during the journey across Texas and Indian Territory to Kansas, Ne-

braska, Wyoming, or Montana—during as much as five months in the instance of this journey to Montana. And thereupon this steer, having thus valiantly led his herd to the journey's end, received his reward, which was to be fattened for a few months and then shipped eastward for conversion into beefsteak at Chicago and shoes at Lynn.

So to the men of Tumbling K, about to begin their trail drive to Montana, acquisition of the experienced lead steer of the Texans seemed all-important.

Presently a solitary rider was seen loping from northwestward. Eventually he reached the camp, gave a hail, received a welcoming reply, dismounted as politely as had Jed Brown, announced himself to be "reppin'" for Sturgis, Uncle Jim's partner in the Texan deal; and, on being asked to "throw in with our outfit," unsaddled and picketed his horse, joined a group of squatting punchers, and began to smoke.

By this time the oncoming herd had reached the river; and, along a mile of the river's course, was engaged in drinking. The Coloradan punchers, having no business relation to the quaffing cattle, made little effort to view a scene of so familiar a sort. But every man of the Tumbling K felt irresistibly compelled to gaze earnestly at his future companions; and, while doing so, took care that, neither by unduly close approach nor by untoward sound or motion, should he cause uneasiness, much less a stampede.

In due course the watering was completed, the Texan herd was shunted to its bed ground, and thirteen men, wearing accouterments bedecked with stars, trotted to the outskirts of the camp of the Tumbling K and, after a hail from one of them and a general welcome, dismounted,

cast adrift their saddled horses, and waddled into camp.

Jinglebob now made in plaintive tones the appeal:
"Cookey, pe-lease stick your spurs in. We's all o' us
a-starvin'."

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAIL CAMP

As soon as the Texans had entered camp and Jed Brown had introduced them, as a whole, by announcing "Gents, our outfit," Pieface engagingly inquired of them: "Would you folks like to paint your tonsils? We's packed along some fluid specially for you, with an extry shot or two o' it for the Colorado boys an' Sturgis's rep."

Interpreting a general clearing of throats as an expression of acceptance, Pieface stated: "It's in the wagon. I'll dig it up whilst you gents is rustlin' cups." Confidingly he walked to the wagon, poked momentarily among the few packages still remaining in it, gave a grunt of surprise, and then called: "Hi! Jinglebob an' Cookey, when you two unloaded this prairie schooner, where in hell'd you put the bug juice?"

The two replied in unison: "Left it in the wagon;" and to this Cookey added: "The nine bottles are in a gunny sack under the seat. You can't feel the bottles, for the sack is stuffed with hay."

A moment's silence and then Pieface shouted: "Aunt Mary's cat! there's only five here, an' one o' 'em's uncorked an' is half empty."

Terril, in an aside to The Duke, vouchsafed: "Looks like trouble's comin' to somebody; acause Pieface's usin' his private cuss word, an' he don't never use it 'less he's bilin' mad."

A second later Pieface stalked to the middle of the assembled punchers and angrily gave tongue: "Which o'

you Tumblin' K men knows 'bout that likker? Speak up quick. I don't suspicion none o' you 'cept— Aunt Mary's cat! he's missin'. Where in thunder's Hank?"

Immediately and in drunken tones there came from behind a low pile of brush an indirect answer in the form of "Thash me. Shooray! Am shrighr here." And from back of that pile of brush there rose unsteadily the figure of Hank, who, for a moment, stood silent, swaying erratically and, with glassy expression, gazing at his neighbors. Then, holding forth a partly emptied bottle of whiskey, he announced: "Sheard my name called. Does shomebody want me? If anybody wantsh talk to me, he can begin right now, can show up or shut up. 'Scuse my hi-hiccupin'. Got in-in-indigeshun."

Pieface started toward Hank; but, before he reached him, Hank resumed his oratory: "Am jush little drunk, but ain't forgot my manners. Wantsh to ask you gents to take a drinksh. Sh likker's on ush. Schumblin' K's a-blowin'."

Once more his bottle-holding hand was extended as far forward as he could stretch his arm. At that instant Pieface reached him, with one hand wrenched away the bottle, and with the other dealt a smashing blow that toppled Hank.

Partly because of the blow and partly because of a dousing of the contents of a water bucket over Hank's head, Hank lost immediately some of his inebriety. At least, he became able to understand the purport of whatever might be said to him; and what presently was said to him was phrased by Pieface in his capacity of foreman and was to the point.

In crispy tones Pieface declared: "Where's them three

extry bottles? Five's in the wagon, one's here, three's missin'. Cough 'em up." Hank, who was now in process of hoisting himself to flaccid erectness, having protested "Don't know noshin' 'bout 'em, ain't never seen 'em," Pieface strode to Hank's bed roll, which was lying on the ground, jerked loose the tie rope, opened the blankets, and between them found the runaway bottles. Spinning on his heel he faced Hank and icily commanded: "Vamoose the camp, you're set down." A second's pause, and then he added: "No. You're only fired. Account o' my respect for Elkhorn, I won't set you down. So you needn't leave here afoot, an' can make your getaway on horseback, but git out now. Take any hoss in your 'string' an', when you reach your range, turn 'im loose. He'll drift home. I'll give you an order on the Ol' Man for the pay that's due."

The instant Pieface, in his talk with Hank, reached the phrasing which began with the word "vamoose," Hank stiffened into concentrated attention, discarded almost every outward sign of tipsiness, and listened closely to the rest of the pronouncement. At its close he stretched himself to his full height, his face twitched, his chest heaved a time or two, he repeated, in low and sobbing tones, as though talking to himself: "You're set down. No, you're only fired," and then, suddenly flaring into ecstasy, he shouted: "Only fired, an' so's this." In concert with his last three words he snatched forth his gun, took fleeting aim at Pieface, and let fly a bullet.

But Pieface, when Hank fired, was not where Pieface had been when Hank's gun swept downward. Pieface, who had been standing in erect position, dropped forward to the ground as the gun appeared; and, on hitting the

ground, bounced from it well-nigh like a rubber ball and, with continuing motion, dove against Hank's right hand and robbed it of the gun.

Almost at the same moment Buster and Jinglebob, springing from different angles, each caught Hank in an arm-lock; while, a second later, Terril and Kansas Ed added their assistance.

Pieface snapped out the warning: "Don't hurt 'im, Boys. He's locoed, an' ain't responsible; but hogtie 'im if he won't quit squirmin'."

While saying this he removed the cylinder from the offending gun, an act which rendered the weapon harmless, put the cylinder in his own pocket, and handed the emasculated weapon to one of Hank's captors with the request that it be replaced in the holster at Hank's belt.

Pieface's next action, after apologetically stating to his guests "Sorry the lid blowed off an' delayed our eatin'," was to order Kansas Ed to hasten to the remuda, which was grazing in the foreground, and to retrieve from it any one of the horses that had belonged to Hank's so-called string.

Upon a cattle drive, as at a ranch, cowboys, though providing their saddles and bridles, very rarely owned any of the horses they rode. The horses were supplied by the owner of the trail herd or of the ranch, as the case might be. However, upon the drive as at the ranch, specified horses were allotted to each cowboy; and, throughout his continuance on the drive or his employment at the ranch, the steeds assigned to him formed his "string," and were reserved for his exclusive use.

For the purposes of the present drive, after filling the slight needs of the wagon and the tenderfoots and after

giving Pieface both a mount and a led horse for his short journey, six animals had been apportioned to every puncher, while the trail boss and segundo, because of possibility of their being called upon for more exacting duties, had each been allowed seven. Incidentally, upon a drive as lengthy as, for example, that from southern Texas to Montana, as many as ten horses would be awarded to each man. A trail herd's success in traveling was dependent as much upon the excellence of its remuda as upon the condition of its cattle and the competency of its punchers.

Because Hank's right to his string ceased automatically upon his receiving his sentence of discharge, Pieface's current offer of a horse amounted to merely the kindly proffer of a loan.

During Kansas Ed's short absence on his horse-hunting errand Pieface, who tactfully kept himself apart from the culprit, took occasion to give each of the Kings an unobtrusive and reassuring slap upon the back and to encourage them by murmuring: "The West sure once in a while frisks up." And also, after writing an order for the culprit's wages, Pieface swept his eyes over the circle of the camp, in order to learn, if possible, where the bullet had found lodgment.

He gave, first, a grunt, and, next, a chuckle; and then, turning to Owens, light-heartedly remarked: "Cookey, your sulky's got 'nother wound. Hank's tore the sheet scandalous." Sure enough, at the top of the canvas cover that, stretched over wooden bows, furnished a cooplake protection for the wagon's contents, there plainly appeared a long and jagged rent. Cookey's comments were unprintable; and, on Pieface's observing "Cheer up,

Owens, it can't rain oftener than all the time whilst you're trailin'," Cookey repeated his comments, and supplemented them with embellishments that were of even livelier blasphemy.

Presently Kansas Ed rode into camp leading at his lariat's end a naked horse. Pursuant to Pieface's instructions, this animal was soon equipped with Hank's headstall and saddle, while Hank's bed roll, folded into proper shape, was placed below his slicker at the saddle's rear and was there made fast by a girdling of the saddle thongs. After a small sack of food had been attached to the saddle's horn Pieface drew from his pocket the pistol cylinder he had impounded and also the written order for payment of wages, and handing them to Kansas Ed said quietly: "Give 'em to Hank soon's he leaves."

Then Pieface turned and faced the transgressor, who stood solitary, disgraced, and purposeless. Their eyes met; but Hank, unable to withstand the forceful stare, shifted his gaze to the ground. Thus he possibly failed to see the gesture wherein Pieface, jerking his thumb backward over his shoulder, pointed toward the waiting horse. And yet Hank probably saw, for he gave a shudder and a sigh. Pieface waited for a second in tense inactivity; and then, keeping his face directed toward the miscreant, he twisted his body sideways and stretched his arm to its full length with the forefinger aimed directly at the horse. Forthwith he called, in a voice that carried a timbre like that of breaking glass: "Hank! Git!"

And thereupon a sullied man began his march past thirty-six of his fellow riders, not one of whom would speak a word to him as he went by. Hank shuffled across the camp, blindly grasped the reins of his horse, limply

hoisted himself into the saddle, mumbled an inaudible something to Kansas Ed on receiving the pistol cylinder and the written order for his wages, turned his horse toward the northwest, and rode away in the twilight.

For a moment Pieface gravely watched the retreating figure. Then he shrugged his shoulders, turned on his heel and, heading toward the fire, stepped to the spot where the four remaining Elkhorn men were huddled in a group. Smiling almost sadly at them, he said in gentle and sympathetic tones: "Boys, I'm sorry. But he wasn't graded up to Elkhorn standards." Another shrug of his shoulders, and he fairly howled at Owens: "Hi, there! Cookey. If you're ready, let 'er rip. But, first, trot out all the cups there is."

To the astonishment of The Duke and Bill no further reference to Hank or his escapade was made by anyone except themselves. The Duke attempted, in good faith, to ask some questions; but both the men whom he interrogated were quick to change the subject. And when Bill, standing between Jinglebob and Evans, innocently queried "Wonder how Hank feels?" his ears obtained no answer, while his ribs on each side were dug into by crooked elbows.

In response to Pieface's request for cups, Cookey called attention to the Tumbling K's supply, which he already had stacked beside the fire; and, at the same time, one of the visiting Texans produced a begrimed gunny sack which the Texans had brought into camp. This sack, being turned upside down and well shaken, emitted the sound of rioting tinware and vomited a pair of uncleanly socks and a motley collection of greasy cups and plates.

At the advent of the socks some of the Texans glanced

unkindly at their own cook. And then one of them, seeking to relieve his own slight embarrassment, remarked to Owens: "Our dishes is a heap dirtier 'an yourn." Owens's prompt rejoinder, "Sure. Ought to be, they're older; but ours 'll be filthy in a week," though effective in courtesy to the Texan, alarmed the fastidious Duke. Bill, as a normal youngster, was amused at the joke and not at all distressed.

The eight remaining quarts of whiskey having been assembled beside the fire, one of the bottles was presented to the Texans with the suggestion that, when they left, they take it with them to their camp. This bottle accordingly was withdrawn from the common stock and deposited behind a log. The Duke's sip of collegiate size and the thirty-eight Westerners' drinks of more robust dimension trickled down appreciative throats, and thereupon Cookey shouted: "Grub pi-i-ile!"

Cigarette butts were cast into the fire. The entire assemblage, retaining its cups for coffee, armed itself with plates. All the Westerners, save Cookey, subsided from the vertical position that had been assumed when drinking whiskey and sat on their spurred heels, or rather on the rowels of their spurs. The Kings perched themselves on bed rolls and the meal began. Knives were industriously manipulated. As to forks, the Texans had none; the Tumbling K's men had forgotten all their pledges of the morning; and, but for Bill's having raided the wagon for the benefit of The Duke and himself, no forks would have been in view.

As in the case of that morning's breakfast, eating was done quickly and was little marked by conversation. The meal being ended and the soiled table ware scraped and

piled, the Texans' cook, after giving the Texans' portion of the ware a suggestion of a rinse, produced his disreputable gunny sack and into its maw poked the plates and cups that were the property of his outfit.

As the ill-kept utensils clattered into the sack a Texan puncher who belonged to the first shift of the Texans' nightherd rose, yawned, stretched himself, and drawled: "Say, Rebels, reckon we-uns better get busy with our nightherdin'." With that, he and his two associates in the first shift, as also the Texans' cook and wrangler, gaped and stretched a while; spat in the fire; rolled, each of them, a cigarette; and waited till one of the departing group had done manners for it by saying "Gracias, it sure was a fill." Thereupon they started for their horses, which, having been left saddled, were, with sagging heads and dragging reins, dejectedly cruising about. After pausing to imbibe a modest stirrup cup they mounted their horses and, to a not unmusical accompaniment of equine snorts and of creak from leather, chorussed their farewell of "Adios" and faded from the picture.

Soon after these Texans had made their exit the Coloradoan punchers went through the preliminary motions of departing—they rose, stretched, and spat. A stirrup cup to them and they also took to horse.

Sturgis's rep and the Diamond Five's two men were to spend the night in camp. The presence of the rep would be needed when the Texan herd was divided in the morning; and, even though the Tumbling K had been willing to ignore the Old West's insistence that hospitality within its area be unrestricted, any discourtesy to the rep would, under the circumstances, be highly injudicious.

As for the Diamond Five's two men, they could find

no better haven. Cowboys, when roving in search of so-called estrays or strays (*i. e.*, animals that had wandered unduly far from home), were styled "stray men;" and, during this roving (commonly termed "outriding," because not made, as in the case of "line riding," in patrol to-and-fro along a definite beat), expected ordinarily to find but scant comfort where they spent the night. If they could obtain sufficient grass and water for their horses, they would uncomplainingly sacrifice themselves. Adams and Ortey of the Diamond Five were "riding stray." They had lighted on a pleasing camp and were among friends, why move?

And so there were left in the group about the fire these two Diamond Five men, nine of the Texans, fifteen of Tumbling K's original sixteen people, the two tender-foots and, finally, the rep, a total of twenty-nine, a total which seemingly should include at least one teller of tales.

The Texans, with an account given by a series of narrators, answered the request for a full history of their northward trailing.

At its conclusion Terril began: "That reminds me—" But he was cut short by Pieface's saying to Sturgis's rep: "Have a drink? Yes? Here 'tis. Now, 'bout tomorrow. Speakin' o' the lead steer, reckon, long's you're figurin' not to trail your share o' the herd much beyond Cheyenne, leastwise not beyond Goshen Hole, you'd be willin' to let us have 'im. O' course, if we was to do the regular thing an' match you for 'im, we'd probably win; but your givin' up your interest would save both time an' gamblin'. Have 'nother drink?"

The rep glued his lips to a gurgling cup; and, an instant later, would have assented to the proposition if

Evans had not interjected the unfortunate remark: "Say, Pieface, remember how the rep got throwed by your old wall-eyed Baldy?" At this, the rep's swallowing apparatus became so clogged that he had to be pounded on the back; and then, in good-humored contrariness, he delivered as his ultimatum: "Dern you, Sam. Pieface, reckon we's goin' to match."

Pleading having failed to move the rep, Pieface protested: "I won't match, acause it's too much like gamblin'. But, seein' you're so mean 'bout the steer, I'm willin' to play you a game o' seven up for 'im."

Pieface's remonstrance against matching coins was not due to any high morality, nor had he ever so much scorned games of chance as to avoid semi-annually losing six months' wages to the faro dealers in the cow towns. It was due to superstition. Within recent months every time he had attempted matching he had lost, and so he had come to avoid this particular type of venture.

On the rep's inquiring "Got any cards?" one of the Texans, after a bit of unostentatious fumbling with the Texans on each side of him, produced a well-thumbed pack, and, with an informatory grimace, handed it to Pieface.

Before all the cards had been played Pieface patently had won "high," "low," and "jack," and, accordingly, the remaining cards were not exposed.

Four days later the rep and Pieface met in a Cheyenne saloon; and, after they each had planted a foot upon the rail before the bar, Pieface said: "Thanks for that lead steer. Almost cheated when I played you for 'im. It was thisa way. When that Texan skinned the deck he handed me two extry aces an' I carelessly come near to

playin' both o' 'em to once. The rightful aces never showed up a-tall, stayed buried in the deck. I chanced they would; an' so, at the first rattle out o' the box, I plays one o' the aces the Texan staked me to. Have 'nother drink?"

Only a few minutes were required for the Texans' trail boss, the rep, and Pieface to discuss and agree upon the simple details involved in the prospective tallying, dividing, and delivering of the Texan herd. And thereupon Pieface, who possessed considerable of social instinct, suggested: "Boys, let's wake up an' pull together. Somebody tell a story." No one volunteering, Pieface launched a tale which, though new to various of his auditors, was threadbare to the Tumbling K's men. Nevertheless, Pieface's effort, though it induced disrespectful comments from his own confrères, had the merit not only of starting tongues to wagging but also of causing drowsy Bill to nod less frequently.

One man proceeded to set forth an adventure on the Mexican border, a second puncher described his brother's fight with Indians, a third one rehearsed his impressions during his first journey in a railway train, a fourth analyzed the motions of a famous bucking horse, and eventually The Duke became so emboldened as to embark on a description of the Hudson River and of Niagara Falls.

But The Duke had touched sectional prejudice; and, though no essay was made to interrupt him, he gathered, because of occasional sniffs, that the subjects of his narrative were far from popular. As soon as he had concluded by stating "Many people consider the Hudson's highlands and Niagara to be the most beautiful spots in the

country," he was greeted with: "Humph! you ever seen the Columbia?" "Niagry, hell! if that sewer was throwed int' the Colorado Canyon it'd take fifty Apache scouts a whole month to find what'd become o' it."

Thereupon The Duke correctly sensed that the West, however it might regard any individual Easterner, looked upon the East in its entirety as anathema. This impression of his was confirmed by Terril, who called: "Say, Duke, you're playin' your cards wrong. Discard the White Mountains an' draw to the Rockies."

Deaf to a debate between Northerners and some of the Texans in regard to saddle riggings and the proper method of handling lariats, Adams of the Diamond Five, at Jinglebob's instigation, now launched into a recital which purported to deal with the pursuit of a horse thief. This was of the type designed for pilgrim auditors and called by old-time Westerners a "circular story."

Adams began: "Rustlin' bein' bad on our range, an' I bein' deputized to catch the thief, I wasn't takin' no chances.

"As I comes int' the north end o' town I seen, through the open door o' the Maverick Saloon, a stranger leanin' up agin' the bar. Accordin'ly, I enters the saloon an' looks 'im over. He seemed innocent, so I leaves 'im an' goes out the door. Soon as I gets out, I seen walkin' ahead o' me a man that appeared kind o' suspiciouslike, so I tags ont' his trail an' follows 'im in-an'-out through the crowd. He works his way down to the south end o' the street; an', afore I could catch up with 'im, he mounts a hoss an' slides out o' town an' int' the brush.

"I lost sight o' 'im in the brush; but, bein' daylight, it was easy to follow 'is hoss tracks. So I holds to 'em. He

first hits int' the St. Vrain trail; an' then, after a spell, he drops off that an' turns north like he was a-headin' for the Big Thompson; and then he suddenly shifts towards——"

After completing this sentence by stating a geographical direction, Adams unleashed a story which, in most intricate detail, not only listed all the further twists and turns by the alleged fugitive, but also mentioned the names of numerous trails, rivers, towns, and saloons, and, in this mentioning, made frequent references to the compass bearing of the spots at which Adams claimed to have effected his entrance or departure.

Eventually Adams, in his saga, reached the section that ran: "An' that brought me back to jus' north o' the town I'd started from; an' I would a-given up the chase only, rustlin' bein' bad on our range, an' I bein' deputized to catch the thief, I wasn't takin' no chances."

Avoiding the admiring gaze of his brother Jinglebob, Adams unhesitatingly continued: "As I comes int' the north end o' town I seen, through the open door o' the Mav——" At this point two of the Texans began to grin, while one of the Elkhorners whispered to his neighbor: "He sure has spliced 'er nice." With complete disregard of this comment, Adams had gone on: "——erick Saloon, a stranger leanin'——" Though the number of tittering men had increased, not all the punchers had as yet wakened to the situation, and The Duke and Bill still showed expressions of close attention. So Adams persisted: "——up agin' the bar. Accordin'ly, I enters the saloon an' looks 'im over. He seemed——"

By this time even the dullest of the Westerners had "caught on," and thus The Duke and Bill were the only remaining nibblers at the bait.

Just as Adams had finished emitting "innocent, so I leaves 'im an' goes out," The Duke "twigged"; but, before The Duke ventured to look at the faces of the punchers and thereby loose an uproar, he glanced at Bill.

There sat Bill, drinking in every word as Adams recited: "the door. Soon as I gets out, I seen walkin' ahead o' me a man that appeared kind o' suspiciouslike, so I tags ont' his trail an' follows 'im in-an'-out through the crowd. He works his way down to the south end o' the street; an', afore I could catch up with 'im, he mounts a hoss an' slides out o' town an' int' the brush."

As Adams uttered his final word, Bill, unconsciously freeing his own voice from all control as to tone and volume, ecstatically announced: "Gee! that's exactly what the first man did."

From amid the shouts of glee that followed there rose a single coherent statement, and it was: "Whoo-pee! hook, line, and sinker; ki-yi! whoo-pee!"

The story being finished, there remained naught to do but "hit the hay," this being the cowboys' figurative description of lying on hard ground which not uncommonly was trimmed with sticks and pointed rocks that persistently tried to indent the sleepers' ribs.

As the final remnants of the whiskey were produced and parcelled into cups Terril said to The Duke: "Better take a dose. It'll be the last you get. Trail riders' only chance to drink is in the cow towns that they stops at, acause trail outfits never carries liquor with 'em. An' we ain't goin' near no cow town on our trip. An', too, there won't be no nose paint at the ranch. Ranches commonly is ranches an' not barrooms."

While this advice was being given, Cookey whispered to Bill, who, though temporarily awakened by Adams's

tale, was now fast relapsing into somnolence: "Told you there wasn't much shootin' in the West, an' then you ran plum' into it. You probably won't see any more. The West's as decent as I said." Bill was too sleepy to comprehend or care. His mind held but two ideas, and those but hazily: first, the exact location of his bed roll, and, second, the probable whereabouts of the diary in which, so he had promised his mother, he would make entries every night.

While he was endeavoring to brace himself for a search after the desired articles, the Texans garnered their eleemosynary whiskey bottle and, amid a chirrup of "Adios" and "So longs," took to their horses and headed for their camp. At the same time Jinglebob dragged Bill's bed roll to a place beside the fire, flipped the blankets as a precaution against snakes and scorpions, laid Bill's saddle at the blankets' head, and then gently pushed the youth toward the waiting berth.

Bill sagged to his bed, murmured "I've got to find my diary," rolled onto his side, and became insensate. His last conscious thought was of this diary; but the thought was a bit jumbled by a coyote which, far off on the plain, had raised its taunting laugh.

The puncher who comprised the first shift of the night-herd that was to watch the remuda made his exit. The remaining punchers joined with Cookey and The Duke in undoing bed rolls. And forthwith the camp settled itself into a quietude that, until morning, unless broken by a coyote's jeers, would be disturbed only when periodically a nightherder came in and aroused the relief herder who was to take his place.

CHAPTER V

REAL WORK BEGINS

AT the first peep of dawn the incoming nightherder prodded Cookey into wakefulness, and thereby caused him, as official terminator of slumbers, imperiously to call: "Roll out, you Tumblin' K's."

Each of the camp's prone inmates, after a few protesting grunts, slid from his bed, gave it a cursory inspection for snakes and other biting guests, flapped his blankets—to the masculine mind this was a sufficient ventilation—folded and tied them inside his "tarp," and, shouldering this bed roll, carried it to the wagon and tossed it aboard.

Honesty forces the confession that the protesting grunts were, in the case of many of the Westerners, accompanied by spicy profanity; this for the purpose, as the Westerners explained, of airing their lungs.

In profanity the cowboy rose often to majestic heights. No golf course has as yet yielded expletives worthy of an instant's competition with even the most feeble productions of the cattle country. However, it is no sophism to assert that the puncher's blasphemy, appalling as it was, had its foundation on fashion, the dangers of his life, and youthful sense of humor, not on any desire for wickedness. Just as soldiers curse professionally, so did the cowboy.

Cookey was fussing with his breakfast preparations; Pete, the wrangler, had gone afield to bring the remuda into the rope corral beside the wagon; and the rest of the

men, having tied their slickers behind their saddles and carried their saddles and headstalls to the corral's vicinity, were having a whiff of cigarette smoke and were exchanging persiflage.

"Mornin', Duke. 'Nother cactus today?" "Sam, when you come in off nightherd don't walk like a rheumatic elephant." "Somebody take my face to the river an' wash it for me."

Bill was handed an empty cup and was told "You win;" and, when he unsophisticatedly asked "Win what?" Evans chortled: "First prize for snorin'." Upon Bill's indignant disclaimer, Jinglebob encouraged him by the statement: "Bill, you sure didn't. Slept as gentle as a dead calf."

A moment later and the remuda reached the rope corral.

The putting of bridles and of saddles onto horses, though consuming seconds instead of minutes, was evocative of much cursing. Every self-respecting bronco did two things at saddling time. The moment it spied the bridle in the vicinity of its head it would either push its mouth toward the ground or else hoist it as far heavenward as an equine neck could stretch. The brute, having eventually received its headgear, would yawn, champ the roller on the cross-bar of its bit, shut its eyelids so closely as to leave but tiny slits between them, and then adopt a mood of somnolent, though watchful, waiting for the advent of its saddle. There it would stand, head drooping, flanks and belly shrivelled, the entire animal proclaiming the idea of emaciated woe. But, the instant the saddle descended on its back and the puncher reached for the cinch and gave one tightening pull upon it, the flanks and belly would shift from seeming atrophy to extrava-

gant dilation. And not infrequently a beast would, by a spasmodic arching of its back, send its as yet unfastened saddle flying to the four winds of heaven, and nonchalantly await such comments as the saddling cowboy felt impelled to utter.

As each of the Tumbling K's punchers completed his saddling he dropped his bridle reins so that they trailed upon the ground, and forthwith he cast his horse adrift. Western horses, when thus "tied to air," were not disposed to wander far away.

Each puncher then hastened to the riverside and gave his face and hands a reasonably thorough cleansing.

The ablutions were cut short by Cookey's heralding "Grub pi-i-ile!" He was able to proclaim thus promptly because this morning, as on every subsequent morning throughout the trail drive, breakfast's preparation was a simple matter. Breakfast, yesterday, had been munificent because it marked a festive welcome; but this day and on each of the thirty-one succeeding days it consisted of little more than bread and coffee.

However, at any breakfast time fried bacon could be had by such men as asked for it, and toasted bacon by such other men as were willing to hold a long stick above the fire and thereby scorch their rashers and their faces.

The midday meal during the trail drive would be as meagre as the breakfast, and oftentimes would not occur at all. During working hours punchers uncomplainingly "went to it," and sacrificed all personal comfort. The midday meal at the ranch house was apt to be similarly scanty, save that, for the benefit of gluttons and such visitors as might arrive at odd times, a large pail of beans was always on the stove.

The one important meal of the day was known as supper, grub or chuck, and possessed also other titles, some of them quite inelegant. Supper, whether on the trail drive or at the ranch, was served as soon after five o'clock in the afternoon as convenience would permit. Heavy food in wholesale quantities was absorbed by voracious appetites. Excellence, when it chanced to occur, had a tendency to be measured in terms of quantity alone. Instead of such praise as the present-day "He gave me a well-cooked dinner," the old-time puncher would gratefully observe: "He staked me to a fill."

The Tumbling K's breakfast having quickly been despatched, and all the men of the outfit having properly scraped their dishes and deposited them in heaps beside the fire, Cookey made a swift pretence of cleansing the tinny contents of these pylons. Next, he crowded them and his smudgy pots into the mess box; and, pushing the door of the box upward, closed it and made it fast.

The work horses had meanwhile assumed their harnesses; and now, with their bridles hitched to the wagon's wheels, they were enjoying a snack of oats. Extra ropes and saddles, the tenderfoots' war sacks, and all the other impedimenta of the camp were put aboard the wagon, its canvas sheet was firmly tied in place; and so, except for attaching the work horses' traces and pole straps to the proper portions of the vehicle and emptying a hatful of water on the fire's embers, the Tumbling K was equipped to "pull its freight."

But the outfit could not move until it had come into possession of its cattle. It did not have to wait long for them. The Coloradan beasts had, since yesterday, been ready for delivery and immediate migration. All that re-

mained to be done, in their case, was to tally and receive them.

As for the Texan herd, though it would have to be halved before Tumbling K could tally and accept a share, the division would, because of the large number of cowboys on the scene, be a quite summary transaction provided the cattle did not become abnormally excited and rebellious.

Fairness demanded that this herd be divided on the basis of quality as well as of count; or, in other words, be so partitioned that Sturgis's rep and the Tumbling K should each obtain, not only one-half of all the brutes in each grade of excellence, but also not more than one-half of the shiftless members of the drag.

Ranchmen's usual method of effecting such an apportionment was, after forcing their cattle into a compact and stationary mass, to extract consecutively from this mass pairs of live stock of equal merit, and to bundle them into two prearranged holding spots—one animal of each pair into one spot, the other animal into the second spot. Inasmuch as the density of the grouping lessened the beasts' ability to stampede, the cowboys who were in charge, unless they materially outnumbered the customary ratio of one puncher to each two hundred and fifty trail cattle, would be little disposed to hazard any looser form of sorting.

But, because more than two full crews of punchers would be available for hovering about the present Texan herd, decision had been made to attempt a distribution of this drove while it was in column and on the move. This venturesome process would, if successful, save much time; since if, before the allotting was begun, the cattle were

for a while paraded in their accustomed trailing formation, they would automatically assume their habitual places in the column, would thus—sufficiently well for present purposes—assort themselves according to their grades, and so would spare the punchers from the necessity of skirmishing through the drove in order to find creatures that were mates in quality.

So soon as the beasts should in this manner have completed their self-assorting such cowboys as were about the herd would start it on a course that was aimed between two holding spots, one to each side of the route of march. But, just before the neighborhood of these two holding spots was reached, the moving column would find that its head had poked itself into a cluster of other cowboys; and, at this dividing point, was being disbanded through enforced shiftings of successive platoons of animals diagonally to right or left and so into their appropriate detention camps. Despite this loss of its original head, the rest of the column, pursuant to the gregariousness of cattle, would continue to push forward to the dividing point, and to be there dispersed through compulsory deflections toward one or the other of the holding spots.

Nevertheless, there would be always danger that some brute might balk and lead the whole array into galloping chaos. The cattle with which the Tumbling K was concerned, like almost all the cattle with which old-time cowboys dealt, were unmixed and unregenerate "long horns;" in other words, fiery, four-legged devils. Of the same breed and temper as the bulls that face the Spanish matador, they had nothing in common with the docile kine that inhabit Eastern pastures, and but very little in common with any of the beasts that now are grazing on Western farms and ranches.

While Tumbling K was breakfasting and was packing its wagon the Texan cowboys, after watering their cattle, had withdrawn them far from the river-bank and had formed them into a long and tenuous column. This column, after parading a sufficient distance to allow its component animals to marshal themselves in their customary order, countermarched, and began creeping toward the prospective division point.

Presently Sturgis's rep, the Diamond Five men, and all the members of Tumbling K's outfit, save only Cookey and The Duke, mounted and, dividing themselves into three squads, trotted out from camp and garrisoned the division point, the two holding spots, and the two diagonal avenues to these spots.

Pieface and the rep stationed themselves between the division point and holding spots, and so much separated themselves from each other that there was left betwixt them a wide gap through which the oncoming herd might march.

These two worthies were to act as "tally men" for their respective principals; that is, they each were to count the cattle allotted to their several outfits. Soon one of them was joined by the Texans' trail boss; for he also had to tally, lest the combined scores of the rep and Pieface be in an amount different from that which the Texans purported to deliver.

Slightly to the rear of Pieface was Bill; highly expectant but, by reason of admonitions, a bit subdued. Pieface had insisted that not more than a single pilgrim should accompany the punchers; and, by tossing a coin, Bill had won the privilege of being this unwelcome guest. He was, indeed, unwelcome; but no one had the heart to bar him, even though, as Evans stated, "You never can

trust women, fleas, or tenderfoots." Bill was enjoined to "let your hoss do all your thinkin'," "don't never stir in your tracks," "keep a plug in your talk box," and "be dumb as a fool." Somewhat more practical advice was that under no circumstances should he dismount and thereby invite an irascible cow to "go on the prod" and kill him. Range cattle, when they attacked a person, were apt, as Jinglebob said, to "leave a mean an' oozy corpse."

While Pieface, at his tally station, was waiting for the Texan cattle to arrive, he repeated to Bill various inhibitions against misbehavior; and then, turning to kindlier subjects, said: "Bill, when the herd comes nigh, give the lead steer a good lookin' over. Jed Brown says it's a natural born humdinger. The Texans has named 'im Quantrell. Why'd they name 'im Quantrell? 'Cause Jed served under Quantrell in the Civil War.

"Who was Quantrell? Oh, gosh! don't you know? Why, he was one o' the Confederate leaders; ate Yanks for breakfast down in Texas.

"Was the other Texans o' our outfit in the war? Nope; all too young for it. But, 'cept for Jed, they's all sons o' Confederate soldiers; an', come to think o' it, Jed's ol' man was in the army too—fit along with Stonewall Jackson.

"Why'd they give the steer a name? 'Cause trail outfits, for somethin' to 'muse 'emselves, is allus givin' names to strikin' appearin' animals. Mos' every lead steer gets a name; an', if he's a whale, he gets a big un.

"Contrariwise, specially sad-featured beasts may likewise draw names, beasts that's particularly runty, google-eyed, or scarred up.

"An' mos' every muley cow's called somethin' endearin'

when she ain't being' cussed. You see, muleys, bein' hornless, can't defend 'emselves from other cattle. 'Cordin'ly at night, 'stead o' stayin' inside the herd, they sleeps along its edge; an' so they's allus bein' noticed by the nightherd.

"Why— Oh, cheese! here's the herd. Can't answer no more questions. Ask 'em off Woof when you get to camp; but don't you dare ask 'im nothin' now.

"Look at Quantrell. He's that rhinoceros 'way out in front.

"Now shut up. I've got a job."

Bill, for some time, had kept his eyes so targeted on Pieface and had kept his mind so centered on what Pieface was saying, that he had become oblivious to the imminence of the trail herd's arrival. On his now shifting his attention from Pieface his heart throbbed. Diagonally to his right, not far away and presently to pass in front of him, was striding an animal which had horns that spread well-nigh seven feet, a forehead that was buried under shag, an eye that was ruddy and challenging, and muscles that showed power at every motion. With hip and flank and neck that bore not only the brands of ownership, "vent," county, and "road," but also the scars of numerous battles, the beast possessed every appearance, as Pieface later said, of not giving even a baby-sized damn for anybody.

This was Quantrell, the lead steer. Behind him strutted three or four brutes that had daily and unsuccessfully questioned his right to leadership. And, at the rear of all these beasts, came the remainder of the animals. Trudging, here singly, there two or three abreast, and then in a squad of five or six, they formed a brown string two-

thirds of a mile in length; a loosely woven string that, in sinuous course and amid a cloud of dust, dragged itself across the plain.

On each side of this string, at some distance from it and on a line parallel with it, six Texans, each some two hundred and twenty yards behind the man in front of him, rode in a single file. The foremost of these men on each side was called a point man or point rider, the van of a herd being termed its point. Each of the five men behind a point man was styled a swing man, swing rider, or flank rider; and the margins of a herd were designated as its swings or flanks.

Immediately following the herd's rearmost animals or, in technical phrasing, behind the herd's drag or tail, rode still another puncher, the so-called drag man or tail rider. His duty was to prevent lazy and not unduly footsore beasts from deserting the procession through the simple expedient of refusing to walk any further. His principal difficulty was with his breathing, because the air was so extravagantly charged with dust that his neckerchief had always to cover his mouth and nose.

Save upon untrustworthy occasions like the present one, it was usual to dispense with a special drag rider and to allot his duties to the hindmost swing man on each side, and to the rearguard that consisted of the cook atop the chuck wagon and of the cavvy's begrimed wrangler.

The swing men were expected not only to debar escapes from the flanks of the procession but also to repel such alien cattle as, grazing near the line of march, might attempt to join in the parade. Always these men were riding upon an intricate course. Though keeping even with the herd's progress, they were recurrently called upon to

scurry shuttlewise in and out, forward and rearward, in order to circumvent either their own or foreign cattle. This weaving mileage added to the day's normal stint was one of the factors which made it needful to have many horses in the cavvy.

The point man on either side and his fellow point man across the herd had, each of them, to perform all the functions of a swing man; and also, acting in unison, to be the pilots of the marching column. Ordinarily they rode in positions much less advanced than were those of the leading cattle, since the precept for a successful drive insisted that the cattle, so much of the time as possible, delude themselves with the idea that they were not under serious restraint.

But, whenever need arose for changing the herd's course, the two point men would forge ahead until they were abreast of the foremost cattle. Then each of them would quietly veer in the desired direction, and thereupon the leading cattle would swerve away from the horseman that was approaching them and toward the one that was receding from them.

In order to stop a herd the point men rode in front of it and halted; and then waited, to see whether they had produced immobility or a stampede.

When Quantrell reached the division point he noticed that a cowboy diagonally ahead of him and to his right was edging toward the route which he himself had planned to follow. Immediately there passed in succession across his face expressions of surprise, indignation, and belligerency; and there came a slowing of his gait. He glanced again at the man who thus had dared to interfere with him. And thereupon the brute halted in his

tracks, twitched his head, lowered his horns, humped his tail at its inner end, pawed the earth, breathed so hard as to raise dust from off the ground, and squared himself for action. Instantly two more riders crowded toward him, and they were swinging their reatas. Quantrell, from experience, knew the significance of that spinning motion. He turned his eyes, whether to select a convenient victim or to search for an excuse; and, noticing that to the left diagonally in front of him the course was unobstructed, he hunched his muscles, shook himself, exhaled heavily once or twice, relaxed his tail from its bellicose arching; and then, with an air of "Well, if this is all you wanted, why didn't you say so?" he shunted into the course allotted to him and lumbered along it to the holding spot into which it led.

As Quantrell entered on this byroad, Pieface, looking good-naturedly at Sturgis's rep, thumbed his nose at him.

A moment later the rep returned the compliment—and this with reason. The three or four animals that, in the column, had straggled immediately behind Quantrell, insisted at first on following him into his bypath, and, when persuaded from this, promptly showed disinclination to being separated from each other. Each of these three or four animals, though in a manner less forceful than Quantrell's, made all the combative gestures that he had made. Cowboys, disengaging their lariats and setting their jaws, started toward the mutineers with the purpose of forcing them to separate. But, as these cowboys started, they sensed instinctively the nervous tremor which was flitting backward through the herd, and saw plainly that many of the cattle near them were commencing to hump their tails and to turn their heads

obliquely from the line of travel. In the words of Jinglebob, "the stampede-ometer was a-risin' fast."

And so, at a signal from Pieface, the brutes were, in a body and under a cloud of blasphemy, whisked up the alley that ended in the holding spot of Sturgis's rep.

The next three animals willingly followed in the trail of Quantrell, and the two behind them offered no objection to treading in the steps of the rep's recalcitrant cows. After a minute or so the streaming of cattle into the skew lanes settled itself into a constant and placid current.

Bill, for a while, found interest in watching the hands of Pieface and the rep as they severally plied their tallying devices. Pieface had produced a long piece of cord; and, as every tenth beast that was bound for Tumbling K's holding spot passed him, he tied a knot in the cord. The rep, instead of doing this, was knifing notches in a stick.

Bill, incited by watching Pieface and the rep, presently determined to do his own tallying. Having learned, the previous evening, about tallying methods, he had provided himself, before leaving camp this morning, with what he conceived to be a reasonable supply of pebbles. And so now, choosing unwittingly a moment that was inopportune for Pieface, he called to that busy gentleman: "Say! Pieface, how many you counted?" and received the answer: "Shut up. Seven hundred an' fifty-two. Shut up."

Thereupon, Bill began industriously to transfer from the right to the left pocket of his coat the requisite number of counters; but soon his fingers, pushing into that left pocket, came in contact with a mass of rubble, and thus awakened the recollection that he had stocked

all his pockets with computing tokens. He began emptying the trash, but quickly found that this was drawing his attention from the cattle.

Accordingly he decided to rely upon the storage capacity of his left hand. He was hazy as to just what total Pieface had announced. Was it seven hundred and two, or nine hundred and something? Bill could not recall. So he compromised on eight hundred and fifty as the starting point, allowed a bit additional for cattle that had passed since Pieface spoke, placed a corresponding number of pebbles in his left hand; and then, settling back in his saddle, smugly began to consider the value that his corroborative tallying might be to Pieface in the event of a dispute with the Texans' trail boss or with the rep.

At that instant a horsefly bit Woof on the rump. Two rear hoofs indignantly shot skyward. A startled tenderfoot assumed a horizontal swimming posture, and landed on the saddle horn, minus his handful of counters, his hat, and much of his breath. Woof, despite amazement, stifled an impulse to "come apart," "break in two," "wrinkle his spine," "fold up," and "hop for mama." And so, writhing under self repression, he allowed Bill to lobster himself into a normal posture. Then Woof, heaving a sigh, resumed his nap.

For some moments Bill's attention was devoted to regaining his breath and rubbing his "tummy." He gazed at his hat lying on the ground in front of him; but, intimidated by the prohibition against dismounting, he abstained from attempting its recovery, and presently became oblivious even to the hat's existence as he began scanning the brands on the passing animals.

Jinglebob yesterday had told him that each ranchman

selected and registered, as a trademark for his cattle and horses, not only a brand to be seared upon their hides, but also, in the case of cattle, usually an additional badge known as a "mark" and consisting of knife cuts made in ears, dewlap, or other folds of skin upon the head or neck.

Jinglebob had told him also that, in addition to these vouchers as to ownership, there were three other types of brand; namely, the "vent brand" or "counter brand," the "county brand," and the "road brand."

The vent brand, placed upon an animal that had been given an ownership brand and later sold, had the effect of cancelling this ownership brand. It was an acknowledgment of sale.

The county brand, used only in Texas, consisted of a separate, prescribed letter or group of letters for each Texan county; and, if employed, went always, and unlike other brands, onto the beast's neck. After it had been placed upon an animal, whoever sought to steal him would feel himself constrained either to "doctor" both the ownership and county brands, or else so to alter the ownership brand as to make it identical with one that already had been recorded in the very county to which the animal's county brand related.

Upon a cattle drive in which variously branded animals were to participate, and which was to extend beyond the limits of a single county, a special brand, known as a road brand, was applied for the purposes of the trip. This brand gave to the cowboys accompanying the drive a ready means of recognizing their stock, and also tended to prevent these cowboys from improperly merging in their herd, and spiriting out of the jurisdiction, animals of other owners.

Bill could readily detect the road brand on the beasts sauntering past him, since on the left shoulder of each was scorched a short horizontal line enclosed within a lozenge. This decorative pattern, as well as the herd that flaunted it, was known as "Diamond Bar."

But he could make nothing of the numerous other endorsements on the cattle. To his eyes, "Hash Knife," "Tin Cup," "Bar Eight Bar," "Double q," "Jumpin' Frog," "Quarter-circle Five," "Boxed g," "Whang-doodle," and "Flyin' Nine" amounted to little more than grotesque scars; but, nevertheless, he presently began to realize that certain of these designs were prevalent. From this he reasoned, and correctly, that, during the "putting up" or initial assembling of the herd, some ranches had outdone others in the number of animals contributed.

He noticed also that, though most of the burns were of small size and simple conformation, some seventy cattle sported cicatrices that were both extensive and flamboyant and that depicted, in some instances, heraldic crests or coats of arms, and, in other instances, combinations of religious emblems with alphabetic letters. Any initiated beholder would have known at once that these seventy beasts were immigrants from Mexico; and might well have queried whether their leaving home had put money into their swarthy owners' pockets or whether, instead of this, the beasts, when crossing the international boundary, had been "wet" animals.

The terminology of the cattle range made, in connection with live stock, an illogical distinction between the words "wet" and "dry." While the expression "dry stock" denoted, regardless of sex and age, such bovines as were giving no milk, the phrase "wet stock" signified

merely that cattle or horses had been smuggled across the Rio Grande after being stolen from their rightful owners in Mexico. Equally confusing to tenderfoots was the word "cows," which might mean females, but more often was used as a synonym for "cattle." In fact, ranchmen spoke rarely of "cattle," almost always of "cows."

Eventually Bill wearied of the passing brands, and of hearing the conversation that intermittently shuttled between Pieface and his tallying assistant, Sleepy Joe.

"'Leven 'undred an' one, two, five, nine. No, eight. 'Leven 'dred an' eight. How's that, Joe?" would be answered by "Kerrect." Then a long pause; and, after it, "Fifty-nine, sixty. 'Leven 'dred an' sixty," and another "Kerrect."

At "Thirteen 'dred an' ninety" and Sleepy Joe's "Kerrect," Bill ridded his thoughts of all matters relating to brands and tallying; and, thus being ready for reception of new impressions, rediscovered his sombrero. Thereupon he forgot all the restraints which had been prescribed for him; and, impulsively descending from Woof's back, started toward the hat.

The facts that Sleepy Joe vociferously announced "Blue hell-hounds of victory! stop 'im quick," and coincidentally pointed in Bill's direction, might have seemed to Bill noteworthy, had he not been distracted by other and more momentous happenings.

His first vision was of a sombrero lying quietly on the ground. His next vision was of a cow, of reata loops, and of mounted cowboys; all moving with intense rapidity, and apparently interlocked in inextricable confusion.

So soon as Bill had alighted from his saddle and had started toward his hat, two or three cows halted in their

stride, edged out of line, and, skewing themselves, stared inquiringly at him. After a moment of this inquisition, one of these cows aimed herself in Bill's direction, stepped toward him, went into a trot that steadily increased its speed; and then, humping her tail and so corkscrewing her neck that her left horn projected far in front of her and was near the ground, she broke into a gallop.

From seemingly nowhere in particular, Jinglebob, Sam Evans, and Skinny Terril arrived upon the scene. At Sleepy Joe's exclamation, broncos had been jumped from their lethargic stance and whirled toward Bill. Under compulsion of the dauntless instinct of well trained cow-horses and under the additional impetus of spur and quirt, they had been coming like the wind and to the proper spots.

Three top-class cow-horses, "Buck," "Ginger," and "Spunky," while moving at racing speed, saw that the nooses of their riders' lariats had shot forward and were being "dallied" or snubbed to saddle horns. Instantly and without waiting for any additional signal, these three cow-horses, curvetting into the air, came down hoptoad-like upon the ground. Thus landed, sitting on their tails, protruding their front legs to the limit and keeping them as straight and stiff as pokers, they sunk their front hoofs into the soil; and, by shifting these hoofs in inch-long sidesteps, they kept themselves squarely facing the animal the lariats had noosed.

Jinglebob, Sam Evans, and Skinny Terril, though arriving on different angles, had thrown their lariats concurrently. Each man had caught a single leg and no two the same leg. Whereat the cow, snared by one hind leg and by both her front ones, and snared when she was at the

summit of her stride, somersaulted while in the air. With body upside down and legs in the grip of straining ropes, she crashed to earth; and, at the impact, her horns bounced off and her spine broke.

Immediately each of the three cowboys, by three horizontal motions of his wrist and then a flip of it, not only slackened his reata but also imparted a so-called "roll" to the reata, thus giving it a wave-like motion, which, traveling along the rope to the noose at its outer end, freed this noose from its prey. This accomplished, the three punchers, wasting no time on attempting to retract and coil their trailing lassos, crowded around Bill and Woof. Evans, having seized Woof's reins, held the pony's head immobile against a saddle horn. Terril forced his own horse onto Woof's far side in order to forestall the possibility of a lateral flinch, and Jinglebob, grabbing Bill by nape of neck and by trousers' seat, jerked him from the ground and threw him into the empty saddle.

Evans's soothing pats upon Woof's nose, along with the friendly crooning of all three punchers, dissipated a desire to rear and plunge. Accordingly, when as soon as Bill was once more ahorse the three cowboys cast off, Woof did outwardly no more than to tremble, paw the ground, and snort.

Several other cows had followed the first when she strayed from the column. As she began to trot, they too began to trot. But, when she broke into a charge, they did not copy her example.

These beasts, the moment their leader fell, came to a stand, huddled themselves into a group, and stared at the prone body of their lifeless companion. Their lows,

lathered mouths, quivering muscles, and heaving flanks testified to their perturbation, but fortunately the slain cow had not been torn enough to raise the scent of blood. And so, when the three cowboys, rapidly pulling in their lariats and putting their horses into a gentle trot, bore down upon the puzzled cattle, they shuffled themselves back into the column. As Jinglebob later confided to Pieface: "They sure looked mean for Bill. You say you was afeard they'd run amuck. Reckon you mean jus' one muck? Man, if they'd ever unshackled, they'd a-run three mucks all to wunst."

Even before the descent upon the rioting cattle began, Pieface, with eyes in the back of his head—every top rider had optics of this sort—sensed that Bill was safe; but, from sights and sounds in front of himself and on either hand, he knew that the herd was still on tenterhooks, and could not be trusted to disregard any additional fillip. Throughout the column lowing had increased in volume, and heads were nodding and wagging more generally than normalcy required.

Accordingly, after announcing "fourteen 'dred an' thirty" and being told immediately that this total was "Kerrect," Pieface called over his shoulder: "Hi, there! Bill. Go back to camp." For whatever reason, this instruction was ignored. And thereupon Pieface, in much the same timbre as he had used in his final utterance to Hank, stridently announced: "Bill! camp! git!"

Upon the old-time cattle range, although "vamoose" might be merely a word, "get to hell out of here" only a phrase, "git" was, under all circumstances, an ultimatum.

At the time of the incident with Hank, the significance

of "git" had filtered into Bill's mind. Wherefore, he now reined Woof to a right-about and reluctantly steered the beast back to where he knew The Duke would be awaiting an explanation of the return. Bill faltered when The Duke accosted him; and, forgetting his own carefully prepared excuse, diffidently suggested: "Why'd I come back? No reason in particular, only Pieface said I'd better." And then Bill spied horseflies on the work animals; and, by engaging all his energies in their destruction, diplomatically withdrew from further questions.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRAIL DRIVE STARTS

Soon after Bill's banishment the last of the Texan cattle passed through the division point; and thereupon Pieface, Sturgis's rep, and the Texans' trail boss, riding to a common centre, met, and compared notes. This comparison was a simple process. The rep's "Ourn's fifteen 'undred an' six" having been supplemented by Pieface's "Same here, includin' our corpse," the trail boss announced: "O. K., our count's three thousan' an' twelve."

This curt transaction completed the delivery of one-half the animals to Tumbling K. No written receipt for these beasts was given. No money or voucher for them passed from hand to hand. A ranchman's oral promise of future payment at the agreed time was deemed sufficient.

Tumbling K's share of the Texan animals was now in a solid bunch at one of the holding spots; and, around this bunch, as also around the bunch of Sturgis's rep, was a tenuous cordon of mounted cowboys.

Each of these cordons had originally been composed exclusively of Diamond Five and Tumbling K men, but subsequently these men had been in part supplanted by Texans; for, as the marching herd invaded the holding spots, the Texan punchers accompanying it were automatically freed from duty at the herd's point and swings and drag.

The thus liberated Tumbling K people forthwith hastened across the plain to the Coloradan cattle; and, with

the assistance of the guarding Coloradan cowboys, shifted this live stock from a huddled mass into a filament, forced this filament through a tally station, and found the number of beasts to be exactly what it should have been—seventeen hundred.

These animals, still confined to their thin-drawn ordering, were then, under convoy by flanking punchers, driven toward the holding spot that held the Texan cattle of Tumbling K. As this holding spot was neared, such of its warders as were between it and the oncoming Coloradan beasts receded from their posts, and thus withdrew all barriers to an amalgamation of the two lots of kine. Straightway and in obedience to cattle's instinctive hunger for companionship, the two hitherto unassociated groups of animals began to flow toward each other. They met and merged as easily and completely as though they had been blobs of mercury upon a slippery platter.

As soon as this had been effected, cowboys moulded the thus united herd into a column like those with which the plain was now familiar. Tumbling K punchers strung themselves scatteringly along this column, six of them on each side of it. Such of them as required fresh horses had previously visited the remuda and exchanged their steeds. Pieface captured his led horse; a brute that, at the end of a tow line, looked wild-eyed and skeptical.

The Duke and Bill clambered into saddles.

Cookey, whose tending of the remuda had long since been taken over by Pete the wrangler, had already "hooked" the work teams to the wagon; and, after a precautionary glance at the ashes of his fire, he hoisted himself to the driver's seat, gathered his reins, and reached for his whip. A forward glance showed him that the trail

herd was in motion; a rearward peek, that the cavvy was duly marshalled behind the wagon, and that Pete was in his proper place. Accordingly, Cookey said "Giddap," and a caravan, almost a mile long, had begun its dusty journey.

Bill, ever since his banishment from the tally station, had been somewhat dreading what Pieface might say to him. Consequently, he had squirmed a bit when, before the drive began, Pieface passing the camp had, by calling "Hi, there! Bill," and by nodding his head, invited a disconcerted youth to hold a conference. Bill went to where Pieface, in indolent pose, was seated on a bronco, and he was plucky enough not to lag on the way, even though he conjured up alarming pictures of Hank, scalping Indians, and lightning strokes.

Pieface was sitting with his body twisted well-nigh sideways in the saddle, with his right knee crooked around the saddle horn, and with his right foot freed from its stirrup and shifted to the left side of the steed. This posture was a sign of placidity, for the average cowboy, whenever anything was, as he said, "eatin' on 'im," kept both feet in the stirrups and bedded himself deeply into the saddle. But Bill, as yet unversed in Western ways, was oblivious to this significance.

When he arrived near Pieface's horse, Pieface, instead of scolding, leaned forward; and, in most genial tones, said: "Bill; called you to leave camp, thinkin' you might not like The Duke to overhear. This mornin', at the tally station, I wasn't figurin' to bawl you out; wasn't intendin' to scold you none a-tall. Only things looked a while to be kind o' frayed on the ends. Some o' them cows plainly had extry aces up their sleeves; an', if they'd

ever started in to play 'em, the steeple might a-come off the church. 'Peared, for a short spell, like the whole caboodle on 'em might, any instant, break int' a hallelujah chorus; an' that's right where I yelled at you to fog it."

After pausing for a puff at a cigarette, Pieface continued: "Bill, you got to watch yourself with them beasts. They's safe when you's ahorseback; but don't you never dismount inside a quarter o' a mile of 'em. That's us cowboys' deadline for oursel's. Us punchers, when ridin' single, never dismounts, onless we has to, within that distance. Leastwise, if we does, we's apt derved soon arterward to be shinnyin' int' our saddles. O' course, we often has to work afoot near the cattle. But then, as far's possible, we's protected by mounted riders; an', even so, we always expects to do some side-steppin' an' fancy dodgin'."

Another momentary break in the monologue, this also due to smoking; and then Pieface went on: "I won't say nothin' to The Duke 'bout you; but mebbe you, arter what you seen out there, better keep 'im from gettin' too nigh to cows when he's afoot. I don't like to say no more to him on the subject, 'cause I talked yesterday so strong 'bout it to both you gents. So long, Bill, if I don't see you again. Anyhow, I'll see you at the ranch."

Generous Pieface! he had saved Bill's face. Wily Pieface! he had used diplomacy instead of rebuke. And he had changed Bill from a mere admirer into a slave.

After a grateful smile at the retreating foreman, Bill responded instantly to the dictates of normal boyhood. Accordingly, because his apprehensiveness had vanished, he filled its void with arrant boldness and newfledged self-righteousness; and, untouched by even the slightest appreciation of his own hypocrisy, sought for a victim.

Stalking back to camp and confronting The Duke, he looked his elder brother squarely in the eye and, in the manner of voice traditionally employed by generals when addressing troops, announced: "Look here, Duke. I've just been talkin' to Pieface. You've got to quit gettin' too near the cattle, or you'll be killed by 'em if you don't look out."

The Duke, despite the fact that as yet he had been allowed no opportunity for hazard of this sort, was so humbled through mindfulness of his discipline of yesterday and so disarmed through amazement at Bill's present arrogance, as wholly to overlook his own available defence of alibi; and accordingly he dazedly answered: "I won't any more."

As the trail herd began its journey, Pieface, the rep, the Diamond Five men, the Texans' trail boss, some of the Texan punchers and a few of the Coloradan cowboys rode to the vicinity of the moving wagon on which was Cookey, and near which were The Duke and Bill. There rose from this group of onlookers a chorus of farewells and a line of waving hats. In the distance, at the rep's holding spot, were yet other waving hats, for the rep's cattle were detaining various punchers there.

One of the Texans, shaggy headed as were all the Texans, gleefully shouted: "Reckon we-uns gits shaved afore you-uns does. We's headin' for the barber."

Upon long trail drives, cowboys' heads, through enforced abstinence from razor and scissors, grew to look like those of poodles. And so, upon arrival at a cow town, the first place sought was apt to be, not a saloon, but a barber shop.

Tumbling K's trail herd had already reached and

crossed the river; and all of the caravan's spectators, excepting only Pieface, had drifted back to their respective stations. Pieface was waiting to see that the wagon safely crossed. There was a possibility of quicksand; no other danger, since the water was not deep enough to call for even putting blocks between the axles and the wagon body. It rolled the wagon in seemly way, and uneventfully reached midstream. At that point the horses, despite their previous watering and Cookey's whip lash and all his unprintable remarks, stubbornly halted for a drink. A moment later the rear wheels began to "bog down." Instantly Cookey's blasphemy subsided, and all the energy that otherwise would have contributed to its continuance was transferred to the whip. Three slashing descents of the lash, and the work teams, plunging forward, pulled loose the wagon and scrambled with it to the further bank.

As Tumbling K's wagon climbed onto the sandy level of the further shore, Pieface, bound for Cheyenne, deserted the outfit; and, swerving his steed and led horse toward the northwest, urged them into a gentle lope. Bill, after watching the departure, looked backward and saw that the Texans and the rep had strung out the rep's cattle and started to conduct them along Pieface's route, and that the Diamond Five men and Coloradan punchers were dispersing on the plain. Then Bill heard a noise that was new to him. It was a medley composed of the sounds from colliding horns, from the crackling of hoofs and ankle joints, from the bellows, lows, and bleats of the trudging cattle. This strange noise he was to hear continuously throughout thirty-two successive days. Moreover, throughout thirty-one successive nights there would be still other sounds, of which he as yet had received no hint.

The two tenderfoots were under stringent orders to travel behind the drag. They were not wanted at any place nearer to the front, for cowboys believed it to be axiomatic that every tenderfoot was freighted with ability to cause trouble for other people. As Evans, exasperated by some blunder of The Duke's, said to Terril: "If all the folks back East is pilgrims an' all lives together, how'n hell does any on 'em stay alive?"

And so The Duke and Bill remained near the wagon as, with the beasts before it and behind, it snailed across the prairie. Presently they turned their attention to Cookey, and buried him in questions.

While The Duke was asserting that several of the Texans had said scarcely a word to him and was asking the reason for this, Bill demanded: "Cookey, if cattle's as dangerous as Pieface says an' 'll attack every person they see afoot, why won't they tackle our camp at night? Gee! I'm gettin' scared o' goin' to sleep."

At this, Owens, smiling indulgently, replied: "Guess I'd better answer Bill's question first. He's the noisiest. They do intentionally attack a camp sometimes; but it's very, very rare—so rare that you never think worth while to figure on it. You see, while cattle have it in for whatever one or two dismounted men they run across, they somehow or other appear to be afraid of any sizable group of dismounted men; and so they mos' generally, almos' always, steer clear of it.

"When they do attack a camp—and mind you, Bill, it's so rare that you needn't expect to see it; and, to cheer you up, I'll tell you, Bill, that, if you do see it, you probably won't live through it. But seriously, Bill—when they do attack a camp, it usually means only that some

onery brute has got dyspepsia and gone on the prod, and that the rest of the cows are followin' along out of curiosity or for the fun of the thing. Unless they happen to break into a stampede, they're easily shooed away; all except the one locoed idiot that gave the party, and somebody usually has to shoot her. But don't you look forward to seein' any such thing; for, as I said, it don't often happen.

"Of course, when you're horseback, if you crowd close to cattle, some of 'em's likely to side-swipe at you with their horns; and, now and again, one of 'em 'll go on the prod and start for you. But you likely won't get near enough the herd for that. If you do get in a mix-up, jus' loose your reins an' trust your pony to pull you out of it. If you let him alone, he'll outdodge any cow that ever wore horns."

Bill, who yesterday had craved for ferocity in cowboys, had, nevertheless, been more than a trifle discomfited by the unexpected fact that the cattle in front of him were dangerous and would continue to be so. Perhaps Bill, being a normal youth, was quite illogical. In any event, he took much comfort from Cookey's assurance that the camp would be free from nocturnal raids.

But this comfort was to be short-lived, for Cookey, after a slight pause, continued: "Of course, nothin' I've said relates to cows' stampedin' outside of camp and later racin' through it. They do that way once in a while. You see, when they start stampedin', they pay no attention to where they're headed. They merely buy a through ticket to hell an' gone, and try to catch the first train. They're crazy at the time. If you're in camp, and see or hear 'em comin', and can't climb on your horse, duck under the wagon or else shin into it. It's your only chance."

To Bill's "Honest?" Cookey had answered "Yes," and so Bill said, "Gee!" scratched the back of his head and lapsed into silence.

Taking advantage of this, Cookey turned to The Duke and continued: "Now, Duke, 'bout some of the Texans not talkin' to you. That didn't signify anythin', 'cept that those particular men weren't talkative. If you'll stop to think, you'll recall that those silent fellows didn't say much of anything to each other. I guess you're contrastin' 'em with the Tumblin' K outfit. If so, you're makin' a mistake, for our outfit's unusually gabby. Your Uncle Jim's very popular on the range. Consequently, he's gathered 'round himself a lot of riders that like him and like each other; and so are happy and contented. And, because they're happy and contented, their tongues are frolicsome.

"But they haven't, all of 'em, the same quantity of the gift of gab. Some of 'em are tongueier 'an others. For instance, Shorty Brown— Don't expect he's said more 'an ten words to you since he was introduced—that's nothin', jus' got one of his quiet times—is in love with a girl, a biscuit shooter down at Laramie; and, every time he gets desperately affectionate, he thinks 'bout her, and stops talkin'.

"Does he go to see her? No. Wouldn't leave the cows. Cares more for the cows 'an he does for her, and doesn't realize it. Some day he'll marry her and stay put a while; but, all of a sudden, he'll quit her, and elope with a trail herd.

"He'll come out of this quiet fit in a day or two and 'll tune up, and when he starts to prattle it sounds like rain on a tin roof.

"Hi, there! you lead horse. Stop bitin', or I'll skin the pants off you."

After successive puffs of cigarette smoke had left Cookey's mouth, Cookey suddenly began: "Say, Duke, guess I didn't answer your question after all. Sort of strayed away from it. Cowboys, as a class, are no more chatty and no more mum than other people are; 'cause cowboys are jus' people, and 'cordingly there's nothin' queer 'bout 'em. Some people talk, and some don't: same way with cowboys. Only, there's this difference. Cowboys, 'cause they often have to stay alone for a long time when they're outridin' or are posted at a line camp, are more apt 'an other people, specially city people, to get out of the habit of talkin'.

"And, then, a puncher's, from the nature of his business, compelled to be suspicious of all strangers. For all he knows, the strangers may be rustlers, nesters, or sheep men. And so, when meetin' strangers, he's apt, at first, to be quite reticent.

"Hi, there! you lead horse.

"You probably noticed that, when the Texans came int' camp, though there was none of the hurrah that our boys gave you and Bill yesterday mornin', the meetin' was nevertheless offhand and very cordial. That's because our meetin' with the Texans was a meetin' 'tween two outfits that knew all 'bout each other, even if only by hearsay. Incidentally, the hurrah for you and Bill was 'cause you two were in the family.

"But wait till we meet up with an utterly strange outfit, and you'll see a somewhat different situation—at first, comparatively little conversation, and then a slow and gradual thawin' out till the boys get to know each other.

"However, when folks tell you that cowboys, as a class, are morose, don't believe it. They're either temporarily out of the habit of talkin', or else they're suspicious of the people they're talkin' to.

"Guess now I'll stamp 'Selah' on my oratory.

"Dern you! fool horse out there in the lead."

Some desultory questions and answers passed between The Duke and Cookey; and then, as a summary of them, Cookey added: "The Texans' faces showed the nervous strain from trail drivin'. You'll see the same sort of facial expression on punchers while they're gentlin' broncs. The boys concentrate so hard that their nerves get tense; and, while they're in this condition, they're apt, at times, to be quick-tempered—jus' the way the rowin' crew back at college is occasionally. From an athletic standpoint, looks like bein' a little overtrained.

"And, jus' 'cause of this tendency to give snappy answers when he's under strain, the puncher gets the reputation of bein' always as savage as he sometimes talks."

At this, Bill piped up: "Why's he under strain?" Cookey gave a despairing look at his questioner, and answered: "Nebuchadnezzar's pale pink coat! Bill, don't you know that, next to war, his vocation is the most dangerous one in the country? The average cowboy can do only seven years of active riding.

"Why does he stop at the end of seven years? 'Cause he has to. Either he's so badly injured that he can't continue; or else, in some cases, he's been killed.

"What killed him? Heavens! Bill: any one of a dozen things; horses, cows, quicksand, drowning, lightnin', thirst, starvation, gettin' froze to death, mebbe Indians, and—Bill, you wait awhile, and you'll see for yourself how

cowboys can get enough excitement out of life without wastin' time in shootin' at each other.

"Why do they—? What? Didn't catch your question, but it's no loss.

"Oh! yes; have I ever seen cattle start a stampede outside a camp, and race through it? Sure thing. Happens all the time, 'bout every fifteen minutes.

"Bill, didn't mean to tromple your feelin's. Was jus' talkin' nonsense. I've seen it once. Saw it from under the wagon. Nobody hurt.

"Say! Bill, don't do that. Don't go forward. The men ahead there don't want you, for you may mustard the cattle.

"Say! Bill, don't do that. Don't go back to where Pete is. He doesn't want you, for you may rampage the cavvy.

"Say! Bill, if you're sick of ridin', tie Woof's reins to the tail-board, let him trail behind the wagon, and you climb up here with me."

The Duke construed this invitation as all-inclusive; and thus he, as well as Bill, were presently seated beside Cookey on the driver's bench. Cookey's theory was that the pilgrims' presence on this modest throne would insure their absence from possible chance for mischief making.

To an initiated observer, the progress of a well managed trail herd was technically an interesting matter.

Save on occasion from behind the drag, there ordinarily was no urging to quicken speed. Under normal conditions, the cattle, while unconsciously influenced as to their choice of direction, were permitted, day after day, except at river crossings or when stampede was threatening, to determine their own rate of travel.

To assure uniformity in this rate, it was necessary that

all of the cattle, except the lead steer, should cling closely to the tracks of the beasts ahead of them. Every time a cow veered toward a succulent wisp of bunch-grass, she increased the number of steps she needs must take to reach the night's halting place; and so, to that extent, she slowed herself and at least some of the animals behind her.

Accordingly, the moment a swing rider saw a beast swerve from its path, he would maneuver his horse into earshot of the animal; and then, by shrill announcement of "Yip! Yip!" would impel it to resume its place in the marching herd. If the animal lagged however slightly, "Yip! Yips!" would be followed by more forceful language; and, if expedient, the puncher would add a physical threat by spurring his horse toward the sinner's flank.

The trend of the march, though orderly, was winding, not direct. Because cattle, when peaceable, lacked initiative, the lead animals were apt, like drunken sailors, to shun the straight line and to navigate along a zigzag or a series of curves. In bird's-eye view, the trail herd would have resembled a huge snake.

At an hourly rate not to exceed three miles, the herd would creep onward all day long except for an hour's rest and grazing at noon.

After The Duke had finished telling Owens all the recent developments at college, and Bill had questioned him to desperation, the three on the driver's bench quit talking; and, all the while, the caravan snailed forward.

Bill, presently becoming bored with inactivity, decided to resume his seat on Woof; and, as the wagon stopped, The Duke also deserted the vehicle. With gingerly tread and apprehensive glance at the cattle nearest him, Bill hastened to the wagon's rear, unloosed his horse from its

tow line, and, with no small relief of mind, found himself safe in the saddle. And next, he disengaged The Duke's horse.

The two, having mounted, began discussing what form of adventure they should attempt. They craved some entertainment, and the scenery offered none. Yesterday Bill had been excited by all he saw, but today's course was not far from a repetition of that of yesterday, and Bill found no new phase to hold his interest. As for The Duke, today as yesterday he was distressed by what he considered the crudeness of the landscape—its assertive rawness and entire lack of artificial prettiness. But, before the brothers could decide upon a venture, Cookey, from the wagon, called to them: "You folks hungry? Herd's stopped for noonin', so we'll eat soon's I can get coffee made."

Wood was produced from the cowskin platform suspended beneath the wagon, and accordingly a fire was presently in blaze. Hot coffee and dusty chunks of bread marked the limits of the menu.

But The Duke and Bill each received an additional and not unpleasing course. Among the punchers who, in instalments, came back from the herd for a hasty gulp and bite, was Jinglebob. He took a fleeting look at the faces of the tenderfoots; exclaimed "Lobsters!" and, thereupon wheeling toward Owens, he demanded: "Cookey. Can o' tomats quick, fire engine style. Pilgrims is burnin' up."

The Duke and Bill had each known that the other's face looked like raw beef and that his own face was extremely painful. Neither of them had been forewarned of the power of Western sun when its rays mixed with alkali dust, and so neither of them had taken precautions, or had a remedy. Besides, they had feared that any com-

plaints by them might be thought unmanly, and might lower them in the cowboys' estimation.

Cookey having produced the desired can, Jinglebob drove an axe into its top and freed its contents. Extracting one of the raw tomatoes, he wiped it across the face of astonished Bill, and handed the can to The Duke. "Grab a tomat an' slosh your face," he said, "Reckon I'll eat now." With that, Jinglebob squatted by the fire and became absorbed in his luncheon. The Duke, encouraged by Bill's grin, finically touched a tomato to his own face; gave a gasp of pleased surprise; and smeared his countenance with the pulp. Acid was fighting alkali and banishing pain. And so, when Jinglebob from out of a mouth untidily stuffed with bread and dust suggested "Swallow the slops an' give Bill a whack, 'll clear your throats," The Duke took him at his word and divided with his brother the liquid remaining in the can. Two throats felt better.

Within an hour the men had lunched, the herd had rested and got a taste of forage; and so, after a cigarette or two had been smoked by each cowboy in the company of his fellows, the herd was once more started on its journey.

For two hours or more, the pilgrims, again on horseback, traveled beside the wagon. And then, with no purpose other than to move diagonally forward for only so short a distance as would allow them to view the brands upon the rearmost animal in the drag, they embarked upon what they expected would be a slight advance along the herd's left swing.

But they were youthful, and Bill was enterprising.

The Duke, during his stay on the wagon seat, had per-

force given ear to a long colloquy in which Bill, by eager questions, and Cookey, by patient answers, had discussed the various scars upon Tumbling K's new cattle.

This colloquy had been pursued with zest by Bill from the moment he discovered that The Duke not only knew nothing about cattle brands but did not remember ever to have seen one. And so, throughout the colloquy, Bill, from time to time, had interjected: "Now, Duke, remember that."

All this instilled in The Duke a mild curiosity in regard to the badges seared onto the animals that were raising dust ahead of him.

Bill, on his part, had learned the names of many of the inburned designs, and now was able to identify and glibly to mention such titles as "Flyin' Nine," "Hash Knife," "Ridin' Boot," and "Kitchen Stove."

But, when Cookey asked "How do you read the brand on the Colorado stock?" Bill realized that, not only he had not yet seen this brand, but also had not yet heard anything as to the nature of its pattern. In self-defence and after a sidelong glance at The Duke, Bill, with mildly rising inflection in his voice, suggested: "Guess they probably got the same road brand as the others?"

"They haven't any road brand," Cookey said. Bill sighed, momentarily squelched. But when Cookey added, "Don't need one, 'cause they're all branded alike—all with a 'Flamin' Torch,'" Bill exclaimed, "Gee!" and then strategically turned to The Duke and said: "You probably don't know what it looks like." The Duke did not. Neither did Bill. This brand, despite its name, resembled an artless portrait of a wilted turnip.

It was natural that Bill should now have an irresistible desire to investigate, so he and The Duke began to

inch forward. The Duke, who was wool-gathering—if thoughts of a distant girl may be thus crudely termed—instinctively let his horse keep pace with Bill's. Wishing to inspect some brand that then was just ahead of them, they advanced from cow to cow, and from flanking puncher to flanking puncher.

The further they advanced the less genial were the punchers' hails, but no one of the men they skirted felt himself called upon to give drastic orders and thus to mar a pilgrims' holiday. So each of the more rearward swing men, limiting himself to grunts when accosting the two visitors, uncommunicatively watched them begin their progress toward the man in front of him, and afterward launched into a soliloquy that was as solacing as it was profane.

When overpassing Sleepy Joe, who was the second rider behind the point man, Bill heard a muttered reference to blue hell-hounds. Its mental association with events of the morning gave him a qualm and he was about to turn back his horse. But The Duke's "There's another funny brand" dissolved Bill's prudence, and they continued to thrust into forbidden territory.

Undeterred, when overlapping Kansas Ed, by his ejaculation, "Smell of a goat!" undeterred, because they did not appreciate either that this sharply uttered phrase was a so-called private cuss-word, or that the voicing of a private cuss-word was, under tense conditions, ordinarily a danger signal or a challenge, they pushed on.

Because Kansas Ed's suggestion, "Best insane asylums's all behin' you," did not reach their ears, The Duke and Bill kept on; going so far beyond him as presently to inflict themselves on Jinglebob, who was riding at point.

Jinglebob was the reverse of cordial—he was, in fact,

quite impolite. His opening statement was a surly "Sulphur an' molasses! hulloo! scoot!" this being followed immediately by the advice: "Go off somewheres, an' die."

An instant later he added: "Better go back, 'cause the herd's jumpy an' 'll roll its tail soon as either o' you galoots false-cards anythin'."

Then, somewhat softening, he continued: "'Scuse my talkin' so plain; but all us men is strangers to these cows, an' two bunches o' cattle that ain't used to each other has jus' been throwed together. It all rasps their nerves; an' a long horn's, at best, more notionin' 'an a primy donny."

As the Kings were about to turn back, Jinglebob, directing attention to the very forefront of the column, said: "There's somethin' to interest you. Quantrell's got a rival. See that big cow. She's out o' the Colorado bunch. A natural-born leader. Been busy, all mornin', workin' herself up through the herd. Reached the point 'bout half-hour ago. Quantrell don't savvy the play. He knows he ain't never seen her afore, an' he knows too that he's undisputed led the herd all the way from Texas. He ain't fightin' her none, but he's jus' naturally disgusted with life. We's got to name 'er."

Bill, enthused over the new beast's quality of leadership and forgetful of Jinglebob's references to the animal as a female, promptly dubbed her "General Grant"; and, under this name, the sturdy matron strode, side by side with a Confederate officer's namesake, across more than five hundred miles of country and onto her ultimate range above the Yellowstone River in Montana.

Bill, in his absorption, had edged his horse unduly near the herd, whereat some of the leading cattle began to veer away. Before damage could be done, Jinglebob retrieved

Bill; while Tex Smith, from his own position at point on the herd's far side, forced the column to resume its proper line. Then Jinglebob, turning in his saddle, pointing to the rear, and using no coddling tones, said: "Wagon yourself's, an' fade out o' here. Fade quick." By way of underscoring these remarks, he added: "Speakin' plain but friendly an' refined, git to hell out o' here."

At this, the Kings began to retrace their course. When halfway to the wagon and immediately after passing Sleepy Joe, the pilgrims discovered that one cow carried, in addition to brands of ordinary type, a scar that meandered over her entire side. Unfamiliar with the autograph of a wire fence, the two tenderfoots assumed the zigzag cicatrice to be a brand of interest, and accordingly felt themselves constrained to go nearer to the animal.

Their approach, though almost immediately checked by Sleepy Joe, and by Skinny Terril, who rode behind Joe on the swing line, nevertheless urged the moving column into a lateral sag that, from the herd's far side, looked much as would a bay window on a house. The herd fortunately did not split, and yet the effect of the pilgrims' intrusion remained in evidence for a considerable length of time. As marching cattle in successive platoons arrived at the beginning of the detour trail they each would hesitate an instant as they saw the rumps of the beasts ahead of them deflect to the right; would raise their heads; dubiously twitch them; and then, lowering them, would lumber into the detour and pursue it. Eventually some lazy or adventurous beast would perhaps take a short-cut across the detour's neck; and, by thus keeping to the herd's original trail, would induce all the following cattle to tread the shorter track.

However, The Duke and Bill were granted no opportunity to view a healing of the trouble they had caused. Joe and Skinny descended on them, and they fled to the haven of Cookey's vehicle. When they were again beside him, Cookey said: "Saw you talkin' to Joe an' Skinny. What's on their minds? They got any news?" To this, The Duke, after a gasp, replied: "Owens, nobody ever talked like that to me before. I never heard anything like it anywhere. It was awful. Sounded like nitric acid on a red-hot stove." But, before Cookey could phrase a soothing comment, Bill exclaimed: "Gee! must remember to get it all into my diary. It'll make the boys at my Sunday-school sit up."

At this, Cookey vouchsafed: "Told you that trail drivin' was frayin' to the nerves. Remember how I called attention to the Texans bein' kind of strung up. Guess it's hit our boys already, but it hasn't touched me yet. Hi, there! you lead horse. Quit that, or I'll get down an' cut your heart out!"

The Duke glanced at the accused animal; but could see no difference between its present behavior and that which, only yesterday, had evoked Cookey's commendation of "Watch that lead brute; the friendliest, quietest cayuse that has both spirit an' muscle I've ever seen."

At the end of twenty miles of travel from its morning's starting place, the herd, after being watered at a creek, was shunted from the route it had been following; and, driven a thousand yards or more to one side, was halted for the night. In technical phrasing, it was thrown off the trail and onto its bed ground.

As Tumbling K's herd swerved toward its bed ground, Cookey selected a camping spot some two hundred yards

away from this ground, drove the wagon thither, cast overboard its freight of bed rolls, lit his fire, and began to fuss with pots and pans. Meanwhile the wrangler, with some friendly assistance from punchers who had left the cattle herd, cut out from the remuda the horses that were to be picketed or hobbled for the night, and guided these and the rest of the remuda to a convenient grazing place.

As soon as Tumbling K's cattle began to lose interest in feeding and to lie down, they were gently urged toward a common center, in order that the herd might throughout the night be as compact as possible, and thereby make the work of the guards easier.

On this particular night the process was vexatious because the Coloradan cattle, being as yet unused to long marches, were anxious for immediate rest; while the Texan cattle, hardened by many weeks of tramping, preferred to graze a while longer before they slept.

At eight o'clock, the three men comprising the first squad of the nightherd mounted, rode to the cattle, and began their patrol around the outer margin of the prone herd. At the end of two hours and a half these men would return to camp, rout out their three substitutes, and crawl into blankets. Two hours and a half later another substitution would occur. And so it would go from eight o'clock till dawn and another day of travel; always three men circling the cattle, and, as they circled, singing or whistling in low tones.

The purpose of this music, if one may call it such, was not to amuse the performers. It was to lessen the chance of stampede or of individual straying by keeping the cattle under the dominating influence of man's voice and by

allaying their suspicion that the object approaching them through the gloom might be a dangerous beast.

This music was called by ranchmen "singing to the cattle;" and, however blasphemous or foul the wording, each song was technically styled a "hymn."

At Cookey's stopping of the chuck wagon and announcing "We camp here," The Duke and Bill somewhat anxiously clambered to the ground. They were sooner or later to face Joe and Skinny, each of whom was as yet busy on the outskirts of the herd.

Presently the two punchers finished their task and strolled into camp. The apprehensive tenderfoots were prepared to experience anything except that which actually occurred. Instead of scowls and scoldings, instead of some form of physical violence such as Bill vaguely anticipated, Joe remarked: "Hulloa, Bill; how you like eatin' dust?" while Skinny, turning to The Duke, suggested: "If you two folks want swimmin', there's a good hole in the creek. Some o' the boys's in a'ready. Goin' in's all right, acause the cattle's finished waterin'." And, to the tenderfoots' surprise, nobody either then or later made any reference to the escapade beside the herd or offered any plaint about the drove. The cowboys' view was that of Jinglebob, who said to Bill: "Don't content yourself with complainin' 'bout it. Do somethin' that's better 'an it, an' fills its place. Jus' only kickin' never got nobody nowheres, 'less he was a mule."

At Tumbling K's camp, when the first shift of the nightherd had ridden forth to its monotonous task, conversation flagged and the minds of the tired men turned toward sleep.

Bill nevertheless seized opportunity to open his diary

and to make in it a transcription of what Joe and Skinny had vehemently remarked earlier in the day. Evans, passing behind him, casually asked: "Writin' your girl?" At this, Bill, bridling up, retorted: "No. Haven't any. Too old now for that sort o' nonsense. This's my diary. Promised mother I'd write in it every night."

Evans glanced over the diarist's shoulder, and then remarked: "'Pears like the language you're writin' is kin' o' ripe. Reckon your ma's due for an attack o' hydrophoby."

After a moment, Evans continued: "That there man's talk you're puttin' down seems to be the only stuff you've written out in full. What's them other things mean: 'what the break Man told me,' 'musn't forget what the conducter said,' an' 'Be sure to look up how far 'tis from counsel blufs to—?'" Bill's instant and confident reply, "That's jus' so I'd remember exactly what it was when I came to write it out afterward," was robbed of its conclusiveness when Evans queried: "What'd the brakeman say?" Bill scratched his head for a second, and then blurted out: "Forgotten." Equally into oblivion had gone the conductor's message and the identity of the unnamed place that once had seemed to bear a noteworthy relationship to Council Bluffs. Undaunted by this, Bill explained: "You see, I put down those things, so I'll remember every detail."

As the bed rolls began to be opened, Bill glanced at the ground beneath the wagon and showed a sudden interest in weather forecasts. Ignoring the cloudlessness of the sky and the beneficent direction of the wind, he nonchalantly remarked to Jinglebob: "May rain. Guess I'll sleep under the chuck wagon 'less some o' the cowboys want to."

Jinglebob, informed by Cookey of Bill's timidity regarding stampedes, had seen to it that nobody during the evening had done anything to increase this dread. And now, in most reassuring voice, he said to Bill: "Don't sleep there. Smells o' axle grease. Bunk in with me. Only you got to let me sleep on the left side the bed, acause I'm goin' out on nightherd." Kindly Jinglebob! insistence on sleeping at the left side was a subterfuge. It would place a cowboy between Bill and the cattle.

Conscious of this protection, Bill promptly went to sleep; nevertheless, from time to time, plunging cattle figured in his dreams, dreams that not improbably were prompted by the intermittent slight disturbances in camp. At the nightherders' change of shifts at one o'clock, Jinglebob, going on duty, inadvertently stepped on Bill's foot, and thereby induced from the midst of slumber the endearing wail: "Help me, Jinglebob; they're after me!"

CHAPTER VII

NORTHWARD WITH THE TRAIL HERD

THE first day and night of the drive formed almost a prototype for each of the thirty-one days and thirty nights that succeeded; and yet, except for dust, there were some differences.

For instance, on the morning of the second day after the starting of the drive and shortly before the Colorado-Nebraskan boundary was crossed, a "trail cutter" compelled a stoppage of the herd and an inspection of it. This trail cutter, an accredited agent of a local ranchman, had exercised his inherent right to "cut the trail:" which is to say, to require the herd, if it were not already in form for convenient examination, to be strung out into an attenuated line and driven past him; so that he might have opportunity to identify, and to force the discharge of, whatever cattle belonging to his ranch had strayed into the herd and under cover of it were escaping from their home range. This reshaping of a drove's alignment and expelling of intruded animals was known as "trimming the herd."

On the afternoon of that same second day, at the crossing of Lodge Pole Creek, the wagon improvidently anchored itself behind a rock; and was freed only after several cowboys had fastened lariats to projecting portions of the vehicle, had snubbed these lariats to their saddle horns, and had incited their horses into a prodigious pulling.

On the fourth day after leaving the starting point the outfit reached the southerly bank of the north fork of the Platte River. Here, turning northwesterly and onto the trail which long previously had been rutted by innumerable covered wagons bound for Oregon or California, it pursued this historic route for five successive days; and thus—sometimes directly on the river bank, sometimes a little removed from the bank—was climbing gradually uphill and through a country that, sandy of soil and parched by sun, was, despite its numerous creeks, utterly cheerless.

At the close of the five days, Tumbling K found itself at a ford or rather, in Western parlance, at a crossing. This crossing was, in the main, no shallow spot. It offered wide stretches of "swimming water;" and so, though the cattle and the remuda were "put in" the river, the chuck wagon was driven on a detour upstream to where a ferry was maintained. The nearness of the ferry obviated the delay that would have been caused by necessary adjustments to the wagon and its contents if decision had been made to "swim" or "put in" the vehicle.

The Duke and Bill, given their election as to whether they would accompany the wagon or essay the swim, chose to risk the swim. Tex and Jinglebob, without explaining their purpose, borrowed the horses of The Duke and Bill; and, mounting them, plunged into the stream. After a voyage through part of the deep water, they returned to their starting point, had a short and unobtrusive conference with Terril, and thereat one of them, Jinglebob, remarked: "Duke, you'd better cross on Skinny's bronc. He's better nor yourn in swimmin' water. Bill, you stick to Woof. He's safe as a steamboat."

After cautioning both The Duke and Bill that, when embarked, they should not climb unduly high upon their saddles, and particularly that they should not, under any circumstances, pull upon their reins, the punchers waited until the tenderfoots had mounted, and then Tex said: "C'mon." With that, he led the way into the river. Charlie Plummer, who had quietly ridden into place beside Bill on his downstream side, gently prodded Woof—and, a moment later, Woof and Charlie's pony were plashing abreast through the water in the wake of Tex. The Duke followed; and closely flanking him on the downstream side was Evans on his own wise cayuse. On the heels of The Duke and Evans came Jinglebob and Terril.

The pilgrims, happily for their ease of mind, did not notice that each of the fording Westerners had loosed his lariat, and did not appreciate that the downstream positions of their flanking neighbors had significance. Had they realized that a reata was an efficient rescue rope, that the cowboys seemingly anticipated the possibility of using one, that an unhorsed voyager was swept in the direction of the current, and that the punchers had prepared to deal with this contingency, they might have been less carefree.

Sandbars diverted the waters into several parallel channels, and so much shallowed some of these channels that, during the crossing, there were but two places in which the horses' feet could not touch bottom.

At the first of these places, The Duke felt the buoyant throb which a horse gives when it suddenly shifts from wading into swimming. Instinctively he pushed backward in his saddle and tugged upon the reins. But, before he could do more, a stinging blow between his shoulder

blades forced him into proper pose and made him forget the reins.

This blow from the hondo of Terril's lariat was both well-directed and well-intentioned. Had it not been given, The Duke would very possibly have capsized his defenceless bronco.

No words accompanied the blow; but, after the horses had reached the far side of this swimming water and were on the firm footing of an island or protruding sandbar, Terril curtly said: "You was told to leave them reins alone. You's got to do it through the balance of this crossin', or you'll likely drown yoursel', an' anyhow spoil your hoss."

Bill and his shepherd had accomplished their transit without adventure, and were already safe upon their sandbar when The Duke and Evans reached it.

The seven horsemen gave their steeds a moment's rest and then attacked the last channel. They entered the water in the same order as before, excepting that The Duke and Evans preceded Bill and Plummer.

The negotiation of this channel produced a mishap. A log, floating in the swirling stream, made a thrust toward the bronco on which The Duke was seated. Thereat, instead of giving the animal free rein and thus allowing the quick-witted beast to manage its own dodging, The Duke suddenly checked the horse and caused it to bump backward into Woof. Overboard went Bill, and coincidentally but purposely overboard went Jinglebob. With his left hand, Jinglebob gripped Bill's collar, with his right seized the end of his own horse's tail, and thus both people were dragged speedily to shore. A few seconds of lying on their backs with feet in air accomplished such

rapid bailing, that soon Jinglebob was at work among the cattle and Bill was hoping for more excitement.

In modified form, excitement presently disclosed itself. All of the punchers who had escorted the pilgrims in their crossing of the river had now returned to the stream's southerly bank and were preparing to take the cattle over. But, during their absence, and while the cattle still were drinking, two of the Elkhorn cowboys, forgetful of instructions, had tried to make some of the Coloradan animals the first to attempt the crossing. The coerced beasts, being unused to formidable fords, had flinched; and, crowding backward from the river's edge, had started a nervous quiver through the herd. But before any further untoward action could occur, Tex, Plummer, and Jinglebob arrived upon the scene and supplied the necessary strategy.

The bank having been cleared of cattle, and the herd having been drawn back from the water's edge, strung out in proper tenuity, and, under the leadership of Quantrell and General Grant, headed for the crossing; Tex Smith, once more acting as pilot, plunged his horse into the river. Quantrell boldly followed him, and General Grant, after a second's hesitation, let rivalry outweigh prudence and plashed diagonally behind Quantrell.

Sufficient of Quantrell's Texan retainers forthwith went in pursuit of him; and accordingly there was soon established a continuous chain which, in due time, reached from shore to shore, and which would, throughout its length, have been composed wholly of bobbing heads, if it had not been that, on the islands, the whole bulks of dripping cattle were exposed.

Punchers on swimming horses wove shuttlelike forward

and backward on either side of the chain and kept it connected and directed. Still other punchers, remaining on the southerly bank, "fed in" cattle at the desired rate and thus prevented crowding in the water; for crowding might cause "milling" in the stream, or, in other words, a stampede among the swimming brutes. However dangerous a cattle stampede on land, milling in the water was much more so. Many a cowboy, seeking to break such a mill, has been dragged from his bronco and drowned.

Eventually even the laggards of Tumbling K's herd had been "put in" and had heaved their bodies up the further bank. The remuda and the remainder of the punchers had crossed, and the entire outfit had been united upon the northerly shore.

From the crossing, which lay but a few miles downstream from Fort Laramie, the outfit's route, deserting the old-time Overland Trail, ran, first, due northward, then northeastward, and finally northward again. It skirted, soon after its start, the easterly toes of Rawhide Buttes and the hills behind them; and, immediately after passing the northerly limits of these uplands, it broke into the headwaters of Old Woman's Creek. Swinging thence northeastward and crossing both Lightning Creek and the south fork of Cheyenne River, it led into the upper reaches of Powder River, followed the left bank of Powder River to this stream's mouth, crossed Yellowstone River, aimed toward Cherry Creek, and ended amid a cluster of corrals and branding pens on Uncle Jim's Montana ranch.

From the time that, on the drive's opening day, Skinny and Sleepy Joe banished The Duke and Bill from the herd's flank and until, on the ninth subsequent day, the outfit achieved its crossing of Platte River's north fork,

neither of the tenderfoots encountered anything which merited extensive record.

This was due, in large measure, to The Duke's deciding to practice, not only self-effacement, but also restraint of Bill. He reached this decision soon after accepting his banishment and retreating to the wagon seat. There he permitted his mind to discharge its chagrin, and to engage in more or less serious reflection. Whether or not as an indirect result of his escapade beside the herd, he abruptly realized that he and Bill had been treating as a mere junket what, in fact, was a commercial operation of importance.

The Duke had inherited mercantile instincts from his banking father, and these had been no little fostered by two experiences. Not only had he spent one of his academic summer holidays in serving as lowest ranking office boy in his father's banking house; but also, during the academic year recently ended, he had been assistant-manager of his college's bicycle club, an organization which collected dues and always intended to make trips into the country.

And so, when Cookey on the wagon seat casually remarked "Your Uncle Jim expects to make a good thing out o' this herd. It stands 'im in only a little better 'an fifty thousand dollars;" and thereupon explained that the cattle in the herd had cost but little more than the definite sum thus named, The Duke saw a new light. There flashed into his mind the conviction that both he and Bill had, by their antics, been jeopardizing valuable property belonging to his uncle; and accordingly, out of affection, loyalty, and sense of business, he resolved to reform his conduct.

He also realized that neither he nor Bill had been mak-

ing even a shadow of requital to the punchers in return for tolerance and hospitality. Though at the outset, these punchers, because of their lack of the type of social varnish to which The Duke had been accustomed, had seemed to him more amusing than companionable, more diverting than laudable, he had steadily been growing in his liking for them.

And, when the cows abruptly blossomed into monetary importance, the punchers were transmuted into persons of consequence. Cowboys, as a class, rose vastly in The Duke's estimation when he learned from Cookey that the major portion of the nation's beef cattle were in the physical custody of youths no older than the punchers of Tumbling K, and that some of these Tumbling K punchers were actually younger than The Duke.

He felt impelled to explain to Bill the desirability of better behavior. But his lecture, starting blithely, was quickly interrupted by Bill's suggestion: "Go eat a prune." It promptly regained its right of way, however, inasmuch as Bill relapsed into silence the instant he heard the opening words of the familiar formula: "If you don't look out, I'll write father."

The sermon would have made better progress if The Duke had not chosen to speak first of the cowboys, instead of either the cattle or the duty to Uncle Jim. After but a few sentences, this theme was abandoned because Bill, in the tone of affectionate sincerity, announced: "What you drivin' at? Want to make me like the cowboys better? Can't. If I did, I'd bust."

At this, The Duke suggested: "Now I want to talk about the cattle;" and, though disconcerted by Bill's soliloquizing comment, "If you do, why don't you?" he

blazed away. Bill, though occasionally saying "Geel!" politely listened; and so, at the end of the harangue, The Duke had made in Bill's mind an impression that was very deep and lasted about fifteen minutes.

Nevertheless, for several consecutive days, The Duke succeeded in withholding Bill from the herd's flanks and the remuda's neighborhood, and also kept himself out of these forbidden territories. He was somewhat vain of this accomplishment, and was disappointed at not receiving praise from the punchers; and his feelings were, for a time, a trifle wounded by a bit of persiflage from Evans. Evans, passing near the chuck wagon while on his way to the cavvy for a change of horse, good-naturedly called: "Hi, there! what's reason for not botherin' us any more, feelin' sick?" And, when Bill answered "Course not. We're reformed tenderfoots," Evans jocularly replied: "No such animile," and, without further heed or comment, kept upon his way.

After the first three days of self-restraint, the two brothers, avoiding any aggression that might disarrange the herd or the remuda, adopted Cookey's suggestion, and made excursions into the country that lay well beyond one or the other of the column's swings. These forays, because directly away from the route of march, did not annoy the herd. They merely caused various animals to peek inquiringly and brought a whinnying chorus from the horses of the remuda.

On one excursion, the pilgrims chanced upon an isolated bunch of some five or six cattle which, though a half-mile from the herd's flank, were ambling in single file toward it under compulsion of their instinct.

But cow ponies also had instincts. The moment Woof

spied the roving cattle, he cocked one eye at them, and rolled the other toward his rider in order to lose no time in receiving orders. Construing, as he had by ranching custom a right to do, that Bill's suddenly outstretched and horizontal arm was intended as a signal, he speedily embarked on the performance of what he conceived to be his duty.

At the first bound, Woof cleared perhaps not more than six feet because he had to sunfish slightly in order to land with his head directed at the van of the gadding cows. He then assumed a style of progress not unlike that of a rubber ball rapidly descending a flight of stairs.

Bill stayed in the saddle by predestination, not horsemanship. He visited every part of the saddle, but was still in it when Woof, arriving in front of the cattle, stopped short. Predestination again saved Bill. He was merely tossed from the cantle to the horn. Fortunately, his pony was a kindly beast, and something of a philosopher withal. Bill's right hand had been jolted vertically upward, and thus, in accord with ranchmen's system of signaling, had commanded the pony to cease headway. Coincidentally, his left hand, in its groping for any sort of anchorage, had pulled upon the reins.

In due time, The Duke appeared. His horse—which, incidentally, bore the alluring name of "Stomachache"—was not a peg pony, but rather a dilettante brute with a sore back and one eye; and thus had been less ambitious than Woof. Accordingly, The Duke was able, when reaching the scene, to be right side up, even though the phrase "Handle with care" was implied by the expression in his face.

His arrival resolved the last doubt in the minds of the

now disconcerted cows. Without waiting for any further move by Woof or Stomachache, they turned tail and fled. Woof intimated that he was all for following them; but this privilege was denied by Bill's tugs upon the reins and by his short-breathed entreaty: "Whoa, Woof, whoa! Please don't, Woof! Oh! please stop, Woof! Whoa, Woof, whoa!"

As soon as Woof was calm the tenderfoots dismounted, in order that they might rectify the present drunken pose of the saddle. After much effort this adjustment was accomplished, and as Bill stepped in front of Woof to gather the reins the nimble, loyal beast gave him a grieved look.

A few minutes after Bill was once more a horse, Woof again cocked his eye; and, pricking up his ears and mildly snorting, turned diagonally from his course. The Duke, letting his own gaze follow with Woof's point, discovered another bunch of cattle bound toward the herd, and suggested: "Bill, let's chase them." But Bill was adamant. His excuse, "Mustn't. Might scare the herd," was consciously false, for in the back of his head was the conviction that further exploits should be postponed until he had gained certain information about horsemanship.

After some reflection, he selected Pete as probably the most agreeable mentor, for Pete had no sense of humor. Bill was, for his present purpose, afraid of the other punchers, even of Jinglebob.

And so Bill presently informed The Duke: "I got to go back to the remuda. Somethin' private I forgot to tell Pete." At this, Bill headed for the rear guard of the caravan; and, reaching it, dropped into position beside Ortez. Bill's opening question, "What made Woof start

so fast an' stop so sudden?" required some elucidation, inasmuch as Pete had witnessed nothing of Bill's adventure. In due course, however, Bill obtained definite instruction in equine management through signaling, and also exacted a promise of secrecy.

This instruction he later proceeded to put into practice; having, for the purpose of his experiments, retreated with Woof to the supposedly unseen area that lay at the cavvy's rear. As a result, his confidence was so much increased that his spirits were only slightly doused when, at supper time, Kansas Ed remarked: "Seen you practisin' 'hind the remuda. If you keep on improvin' the way you are, your grandson 'll be a fair rider." But Tex volunteered: "You fellows did a good job in bein' out there an' fendin' off them cows. That sort o' thing helps a lot. Why don't you stay out there every day?" In the absence of Tex's explaining that the really helpful element was not fending but staying "out there" away from the herd—the further, the better—The Duke, appreciating that he had risen in the punchers' estimation, rose considerably in his own.

At supper time, also, Bill had his first lesson in "recitin' cans." Every old-time puncher "knew his cans." Everybody in the ranching world sooner or later committed to memory the entire texts upon the labels which decorated the cans of foodstuff used at his ranch. Competitive recitals, with fines for errors, were not uncommon.

Bill and The Duke were both bewildered at the outset of the lesson. At first, could make neither head nor tail of it. Cookey, having casually laid an unopened tin of tomatoes beside his fire, all the cowboys near it, in response to a common impulse, began in unison to intone: "This can contains five pounds comma guaranteed weight

comma of carefully selected comma red-ripe comma luscious——”

The recitation was here interrupted by Evans shouting: “Wow! Jinglebob. You owe two bits. Sloughed that third comma.”

No more illuminating than this was either Sleepy Joe’s exultant invitation: “Come in, Duke an’ Bill. She’s goin’ good;” or the chorus, noisily resumed immediately at the invitation’s close: “comma handpicked tomatoes grown on specially cultivated——” At this stage, a malediction from Cookey put an end to the revel.

Nor was the situation any further clarified when, in answer to The Duke’s question, Evans replied: “Perfectly simple. Every time you make a mistake, costs you money. Commas is mean enough, but semicolons is rotten. As for periods an’ dashes, some o’ the boys sometimes gets absent-minded an’ calls ’em ’cordin’ to their brandin’ names.

“Why, Jinglebob, one day, was sailin’ ’long fine in a free-for-all, on a condensed milk label, into a saloon over to Green River. An’ he’d been scoopin’ cash from all the other fellows’ slippin’ on commas. Whenst all to a sudden, the bets havin’ been raised, he, jus’ escapin’ from termin’ a period a dot, went kersplash plum’ broke on a double-rig word that was holed-up down at the bottom o’ the label. Likely what hogswallowed ’im was too much gloatin’ over the money he thought he’d won.

“Anyways, that there skunk word that throwed ’im was in the very last sentence. It was ‘full-measure;’ an’ Jinglebob’s callin’ it ‘full bar measure’ cost eighty-six dollars, an’ twenty o’ that was mine. Gosh! I’ve hated that word ever since.”

Presently a more coherent explanation was given to the

tenderfoots; though, at the moment, no attempt was made to continue the game. When, several days later, it again appeared, its renascence was due to Bill. Meanwhile he had haunted the labelled cargo of the chuck wagon.

The Duke remained unaffected by Bill's literary investigations, partly because his own war sack as yet held, in virgin condition, two books that, every day, he intended to begin tomorrow: "Field Book of Botany" and "Geological and Paleontological Guide." Perhaps his prowl into science had been discouraged by Jinglebob, who, on seeing the title of the second of these volumes, casually stated: "Don't know its meanin', but it's a hell o' a dignified word. Ought, if properly handled, to be worth five dollars in a saloon any time."

In response to Tex Smith's intimation about the advisability of staying "out there," the two tenderfoots now inured themselves to outriding far from the herd. Between breakfast time and supper time, it was only during the noon halt that they ordinarily were near the column. With increasing confidence, they attacked such local cattle as sought enlistment in the drove; and, as a consequence, their horsemanship materially improved. By the time the pilgrims reached the crossing of Platte River's north fork each of them had risen from the rank of a mere nuisance to that of an incompetent helper.

Immediately after this crossing, The Duke, despite his indiscretion in midstream, suddenly won a yet higher rating. It had, of course, been the custom of the outfit to tally the animals of the herd and remuda whenever they left the vicinity of the bed ground in the morning or were disordered by any happening at any other time of day. Naturally a count was requisite before Tumbling K

would be justified in pushing inland from the Platte's northerly bank.

And so, as soon as all the animals had apparently traversed the stream, they were collected out of the wide-spread and thinly scattered order into which they had sauntered for grazing, and promptly were forced into a long thin line. Tex and Sleepy Joe were to act as tally men. By chance, The Duke, astride his horse, was near them when the point of the herd arrived at their tally station. With some small interest, he watched the two tally men knot their tally cords. Subconsciously at first, he himself was keeping score; and, after awakening to his action, he continued it because of lack of anything more diverting. He had no device for making a record of his numbers, but he did not need one. An innate aptitude for figures had long previously shown itself, not only in the class room, but also when during his office boy service he had on various occasions been entrusted with the enumerating of cancelled coupons in his father's banking house.

When the last straggler among the cattle had passed the tally station—the remuda was counted by the wrangler—The Duke, after giving Tex and Joe a moment for comparing notes, called, solely for their amusement and with mock contriteness: "I'd be a fine tally man. Made your herd thirty-two hundred and twelve." Instantly Tex, with a startled and intent expression, turned toward him with: "Look here, Duke. You serious? Ain't joshin'? Really counted 'em?" A single "Yes" met all these questions, though they left The Duke nonplussed at the sudden interest in him.

At a beckoning nod from Tex, he moved to the tally

station and there was greeted with: "Joe's count's same as yourn. I'm one shy. Would a-had to retally if it hadn't been for you; 'cause, with jus' two men countin', you sort o' feel as though any difference a-tall 'tween 'em made the whole count unreliable. But we won't stop for jus' one possible cow to the good; an' anyhow I'm probably the mistook man, for Joe's better nor me in tallyin'."

Thereupon, he commenced a questioning which, though at first seemingly inept, nevertheless bore fruit. He began meditatively: "Let's figger this, so's mebbe we can hogtie the mistake;" and then, tripling the speed of his enunciation, he rattled on: "What'd you get at five hundred? Was it eight hundred pound steer, solid brown, road branded, also branded with 'four bar twenty-eight,' a counterbrand, 'flying nine,' an' the county brand o' Brazos County; both earmarks bein' cut swallowtail? You get the same?"

Tex had the cowboy's faculty for observing and remembering the salient features of live stock which he had confronted. This faculty applied itself particularly to such beasts as either were striking in appearance or else were associated with an important rung in the mental ladder of a tally.

Tex, in his surprise, had forgotten The Duke was a tenderfoot and thus unreliable. But realization came when The Duke, gazing blankly at his questioner, said: "What's all that? It's Greek to me. Didn't notice the brands on any cattle except——"

Ignoring Tex's disgusted "Oh, shucks! might a-known it," The Duke continued: "except on that Diamond Five cow with a calf." At this, Tex fairly shouted: "Diamon' Five cow with a calf? You mean with a velocipede.

There wasn't no calf with no Diamon' Five cow I saw. Seen jus' one such cow. Was all by her lonesome. There was other cows with calves, but none o' 'em was Diamon' Fives."

Taking heart from Sleepy Joe's signal of encouragement, The Duke went on: "Of course there was. She's the only one whose brand I caught, except some with the road brand. Reason I remember her is because, when her calf shot out from her far side, crossed behind her and headed for me, she started too; and my horse's beginning to rear at this made me want to fix my eyes on something for steadiness. I happened to fix 'em on that cow.

"What did the calf do? Ran back to its mother, cut around behind her and disappeared in the herd. Jinglebob saw the calf. He was swing man where it ducked out."

At this, Tex, doffing his hat in a sweeping bow, announced: "Duke, your sins has found you out. You're useful. You raised the balin' wire for the wagon tongue, an' now you's made a calf for me. That there calf's where I sloughed my tally, didn't see the little devil in the dust. I'll put you on tally every mornin', if you'll do it. It'll help out by givin' one o' the boys a rest."

On further questioning, Jinglebob explained: "O' course the derved animile's in our herd, 'long with its lovin' ma. Them's the two brutes that Bill chased, an' I got 'chapped' for. Bill an' me's goin' to eat 'em up when we gets time; 'll give a barbecue, an' invite all you sheep herders to it if you promise to behave yoursel's. Why didn't you, Tex, see the cow afore? 'Cause you's naturally dumb, an' also acause you ain't been where she was. You's been at point every day, whilst her an' her calf has

worked the drag. Also this here's the first time you's tallied since we started.

"What's that, Duke? Why didn't the trail cutter find her? Acause she nor the calf wasn't in the herd when we trimmed it for him. I'd a'ready chased 'em out. But the fool brutes later kep' a-followin' us; an', soon's the cutter left, I generouslike let 'em back int' the herd."

The tally having thus been satisfactorily accomplished, the herd was thrown onto a bed ground. While on the way to camp, The Duke, again encountering Jinglebob, resumed the topic of the cow and calf.

In reply to The Duke's opening question, "Do you think it's safe to take them?" came the ready answer, "Sure. They's a'ready took; an', more 'an that, they's now clean out o' the state o' Colorado." This answer, though responsive, was not satisfying; and so The Duke added: "I didn't mean 'safe,' I meant 'right.' Do you think Uncle Jim would approve?" Jinglebob gasped; and then, squarely facing The Duke and giving him a look such as Woof frequently accorded Bill, he blurted: "Duke, your Uncle Jim's a cattleman, a natural born one. Only sorrow he'd have was 'cause the calf wasn't twins. Mebbe the Ol' Man 'ud set down an' cry over that idea. Him approve? Gosh!"

Then, in more measured tones, Jinglebob asked: "Say, Duke, what total did the tally make?" The Duke's response, "Thirty-two hundred and twelve," gave Jinglebob the information he desired, but pinked the conscience of the tenderfoot, who thus far had been inattentive to the full extent of the overplus.

But before another word, Jinglebob banteringly began: "Say, Duke. Reckon you're wonderin' where them

other five come from. Tally shows we's got seven more 'an we started with. The Colorado two's been bitin' you. What 'bout t'other five?" An instant's pause for an inhalation of cigarette smoke, and then: "Reckon you'd like to know where they come from? One o' 'em popped out o' a gopher hole an' the balance was picked off the tops o' trees. When your Uncle Jim lays eyes on that one o' 'em that's specially fat, he'll likely die o' a broken heart."

The Duke, because no accurate information seemed to be forthcoming, was about to change the subject when Jinglebob added: "Though all them five cows was born since we started on the drive, two o' 'em's beeves an' the rest's yearlin's. Things sure grows fast in this climate."

This statement, despite its absurdity, gave a suggestion to The Duke; and, on the basis of it, he asked: "How do you tell cattle's age, by their teeth like horses?" "No," answered Jinglebob, "by the number o' white hairs in the end o' their tails."

This ended the conversation for The Duke. He was not angry, inasmuch as Jinglebob had been most genial. He was not mortified, for, as he correctly guessed, no snub lay in the flippant words. But he was perplexed, completely so. Patently Jinglebob had been endeavoring to becloud some fact or to befog some issue. Assuredly, Uncle Jim was an honest man; and yet why this stealing and all this mystery? Cookey would know, and Cookey would be credible.

Accordingly, Owens was presently made the victim of interrogation. He patiently explained that, under the code of ranchmen, a distinction was made between filching horses and pilfering cattle.

Whoever, under any circumstances, appropriated a horse must be prepared to face a six-gun or a hang-rope. Excuse that the animal's seizure had been necessary to save human life would be sufficient; but, in default of such a plea and its establishment, the thief, when caught, had, as Evans said, "a nasty habit o' gurglin' on a rope;" for, in a sparsely settled country in which water holes were commonly many miles apart, horses, as the only dependable vehicles for human transport, were decreed to be well-nigh inviolate.

But concerning cattle, the code, though in theory equally inexorable toward all professional thieves and though frowning upon any ranchman who spirited cattle, however few, from other ranges to his own, nevertheless made a sporting exception in favor of trail herds—particularly of such trail herds as were bound on long journeys.

Due to the attrition of travel, animals more or less frequently would drop out of a marching herd, because too footsore to keep on, though otherwise in fair condition. Whenever a vacancy thus occurred, the herd's cowboys would keep their eyes open for a recruit. Apart from any wish these punchers may have had to help their employer fulfill his contract for delivery of an agreed number of animals at a specified goal, they were coerced by pride in their own herding prowess. Cowboys disliked giving, and scorned receiving, excuses for vocational shortcomings. If buckaroos left, say, Texas with three thousand cattle and were headed with them for, say, Montana, they expected and demanded that, in the absence of a catastrophe, Montana receive a full three thousand.

Out of this unquenchable spirit grew a legend which,

reserved for the delectation of tenderfoots, ran somewhat as follows: Under a contract to deliver at noon on a certain date, to the mayor of San Francisco, six hundred animals of unspecified sort, four cowboys left Fort Worth, Texas. With them were six hundred calves. Losing promptly all these beasts to the Comanche Indians, the drovers arrived with six hundred and one yearling steers at the Pecos River.

A cloudburst above this river drowning all the steers, the intrepid punchers, when crossing the Rio Grande near El Paso, were herding six hundred and two aged cows. These latter beasts presently died of thirst in the desert; but, undaunted, the punchers pressed onward with six hundred and three Arizona camels.

These camels being destroyed by snow in the mountain passes, the cowboys turned northward with six hundred and four burros. Having found the burros to be too laggard for the time schedule, the punchers, when passing Fresno, were driving six hundred and five jackrabbits, a substitution that caused the mayor of San Francisco, three hours before the contract time was up, to be tendered six hundred and six race horses.

On his starting to say "This isn't what I ordered," the punchers swept their convoy to the Golden Gate; and, four seconds before the sound of the noon bell, the drag of six hundred and seven sea-lions flopped into the city hall, and cowboy honor remained inviolate.

In the unmoral recruiting of gap-fillers in actual cattle herds, if the kidnapping of an animal were detected while either on its owner's range or on the adjoining range of one of his friends, and a protest were made, the stolen beast would be at once laughingly surrendered, or at least

would be peaceably surrendered after all known forms of cajolery and bluff had proved ineffective. Truth was, this variety of stealing was regarded as a sort of cousin to a poker game, rather than as a crime. So much was this the case that, although a ranchman might feel constrained by local loyalty to defend the cattle on his immediate neighbors' ranges, he nevertheless would regard as humorous any moderate raiding of the kine belonging to a distant owner, however intimate a friend the owner was.

Owens, having quieted The Duke's conscience, turned to the subject of Jinglebob's behavior; and, in reference to it, said: "His action was natural. He thought you were decryin' a pet custom of all punchers. Cowboys won't stand criticism, especially from outside the cattle range. They get either sulky or ragin'; or else, if they keep good-natured, they try to kill the criticism by ridiculin' it. Jinglebob's chaff was all of it to disarm you from hurtin' his baby; but, from what you tell me, I guess he had you buffaloed."

Owens returned to his preparation of supper, taking time, however, to exchange winks with Jinglebob, who had remained aloof while the conference with The Duke was being held, but now was coming toward the fire.

Jinglebob's first word dismayed The Duke, for it sounded as though it might be the prelude of further rail-lery. But a glance at the speaker's face disproved this. Jinglebob was serious, even though his opening words did not suggest it. He began: "Duke. That there powerful word on your book, won't you write it ont' a scrap o' paper an' give it to me? Want to have it handy, case we runs ont' a certain Englishman up the trail."

Enticed by The Duke's puzzled look, Jinglebob con-

tinued: "I'll explain. There's an Englishman up above, highly eddicated, college man from Cambridge University, friend o' Oxford, our cook. Him an' Oxford 'casionally gets drunk together, sets 'round, an' reads poetry that's stocked with words that'd make a horse buck. They calls it Elizabethan, an' they dotes on them siwash words that's in it, keeps repeatin' 'em lovin'like.

"Well, this English chap never havin' seen or heard tell o' me, an' not knowin' me from a hill o' beans, an' I havin' to deliver some valuable documents to him for the Ol' Man, I thought I'd run a whizzer on the Englishman an' have some fun. 'Cordin'ly I asks Oxford for five or six o' them locoed classic words, thinkin' I'd ease 'em out in front the Englishman; an', for a spell, bluff him with my learnin'. Might be good for an extry drink soon's he seed the joke.

"So Oxford writ 'em down for me on a piece o' mail order catalogue. Here they is on this paper in Oxford's writin: 's'death, eftsoon, gadzooks, zounds, welladay, odzookens.'

"Knowin' the documents was valuable, I laid off all liquor an' mosies cold sober with 'em down to Fort Collins where I was told I'd find the Englishman. Found him there in a saloon with two other remittance men, all o' 'em drunk as Mexican opals. They was settin' together, throwin' col' hands for six bits a throw. I sifts over to nigh their table; an' stands there, waitin' quietlike an' not openin' my trap. Naturally I had to jus' wait there till they noticed me; 'cause, it bein' a goin' game, me not bein' in it, an' me not bein' even an outside drunk, I had no right to interrupt.

"Bimeby my man—I knowed him by sight—looks up

at me blear-eyed, an' inquires in a friendly, boggy voice: 'Shay, Stranger, wansh shpeak t'any ush? Havsh drink.' With that, innocentlike an' befuddled honest, he pushes me an empty bottle, thinkin' it was full, an' says: 'Drinksh hearty. Whosh it you wantsh speak to?' I says: 'You. I rides regular for Tumblin' K brand. Got valuable documents for you from Jim King. Here they is.' With that, he, takin' 'em, remarks: 'Shvery val'ble 'deed. Mush keep 'em safe;' and, droppin' 'em on the floor, remarks to me: 'Thanksh for bringin' 'em. Have nosher drinksh oush the bottle. So long. Dontsch you wantsch set in our game?'

"Knowin', as I did, the attitude o' mos' English ranchmen to mixin', 'less they had to, with cowboys in social matters, I politely says: 'No. Gracias.' An' then, thinkin' to amaze him, savvyin' his fondness for them queer words, I adds: 'eftsoon.' Let it slip out easy an' refined, like I was used to ridin' it.

"Would a-liked to a-played 's'death' instead, but Oxford had disremembered to tell me how to pernounce it. Well, the moment that frisky little eftsoon hit that Englishman in the eardrum, he hunched up like a pin was under him, an' his face took on a reminiscent look like a man does when he thinks he's detectin' the taste o' kerosine in his beer.

"That there Englishman sat blinkin' at me, sort o' stupefied an' a-figurin', his lips workin' but him sayin' nothin'. So, in a quiet matter-o'-fact voice, I unboxes 'odzookens;' an' lets 'er rip, all by herself. Gosh! At this, he sets straight up, not red-headed, but jus' 'stonished. Then he says to me: 'Stransher, not meanin' no inshult, but jus' cu-cu-curioushty, is you as drunksh I am?'"

I instantly remarks: 'No. Ain't had a drink since yesterday;' an', with that, he bellows: 'Shen why'd shou talksh like a drivlin' fool?' an' promptly collapses under the table.

"I didn't mind him none, but a gang o' punchers from 'nother ranch—kin' o' rival ranch to ourn—was at the bar; an', havin' overheard everythin', began to heehaw me. It near busted me buyin' liquor to dry 'em up."

After a pause for a chuckle and a smoke, Jinglebob volunteered: "Saw Cookey talkin' to you. Reckon he was showin' you how two an' two sometimes makes four an' a half when a trail herd's passin' through a country. It's all square 'nough, you lose as much as you take.

"But, honest, I didn't steal them Diamon' Five critters. I jus' took 'em. Did it out o' deviltry to my brother, no other reason; jus' sanctified devilment so's, in an unselfish way, to learn him not to chap me."

As soon as supper had been eaten, Tex rose, stretched himself, spat in the fire, and, peering toward clouds gathered in the south, remarked: "Boys, better shorten up the stake-ropes o' your night horses, an' drive their picket-pins in good, for looks like the weather's goin' to get wholesale tonight."

All the paraphernalia except cooking utensils and the Westerners' bed rolls were loaded into the wagon; armfuls of sage-brush and rabbit-brush were laid upon the wagon's cargo; the blankets of The Duke and Bill were deposited on this aromatic mattress; an extra man, because of the waxing uneasiness of the cattle, went out to reinforce the nightherders; and the camp waited in expectancy.

But nothing happened. The storm "went 'round."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HERD CONTINUES TO PLOD NORTHWARD

ALTHOUGH it was said that nothing happened when the storm threatened, this statement was in terms of the cowboys' valuation of events.

Proceedings in any cowboy company would have to exhibit considerable vivacity and to promise either carnival or hazard before the average puncher would rate them as worthy of record. He was not blasé, but his usual environment was so fervid and strenuous as to make him calm under conditions that would excite a less adventurous man. As Evans admitted to The Duke, "Things has to look fairly skedaddlesome afore a bronc twister begins to wonder whether he ought a-commence to worry."

Incidentally, there is the myth of a buckaroo who, having been asked "Were you ever in an accident?" replied: "Naw. But onct come nigh gettin' int' a little one. What's that? Why, 'twas thisa way. Arter a mean hoss, break-in' two o' my ribs, had kicked me ont' a rattlesnake that up an' bit me, I—" Interrupted by "Don't you call those things accidents?" he contemptuously answered: "Naw. Both brutes done it a-purpose."

What actually occurred near the camp of Tumbling K was that the cattle, having become increasingly restive under the ungenial air and the spiteful thunder, began to mill; in other words, to eddy in interweaving and irregular courses, each animal making frequent changes in both speed and direction.

Into the mêlée three mounted cowboys plunged; riding as rapidly as their horses could gallop; dodging now this way, now that; quirting the riotous cattle on face and flank and rump; shouting and cursing—all this with the purpose of so thoroughly bewildering the beasts that they would collide repeatedly with each other and thus create a deadlock.

The rider of a polo pony amid rapidly moving automobiles that are skidding on the slippery pavement of a congested city street can readily form a mental picture of the chaotic race-course onto which Tumbling K's three punchers slithered with their snorting horses.

If the terrain were of a character not permitting fleet horses to zigzag at their fastest or if the herd's custodians lacked ponies sufficiently nimble for the dodging, there would be employed another method to break the mill. Two or three cowboys, mounted on their heaviest broncos and riding side by side, would at full speed crash like a battering ram into the herd, trusting the impact to throw the mill out of gear. If this raid were not immediately conclusive, it would be repeated as often as might be necessary, unless suddenly cut short by serious injury to a rider or his steed. It was an effective method, but it was cruel to man and horse.

It had been imperative for Tumbling K to break its cattle's milling, inasmuch as a mill, if initiated by cattle themselves, was ordinarily transmuted into a stampede; and a stampede would not improbably scatter the cattle to the four winds, some of the brutes traveling as much as twenty miles before they halted.

And, as Jinglebob told Bill, "Stampedes has an onery habit o' buryin' folks. They's some amusement in gettin'

yoursel' killed on a buckin' horse, but they's no fun a-tall, after you's been murdered by a herd's runnin' over you, in havin' your friends think they's found a squashed to-mat." During the history of the cattle range, many and many a man with his fallen horse has either been trampled into pulp on level ground, or else catapulted over the rim of a cut bank and, at its foot, entombed under dying cattle that had followed him in his plunge.

Cowboys, though disposed to suppress all milling begun by the cattle, would, when cattle threatened turbulence, compel the brutes to mill in order that the animals' surplus energy might be exhausted in the immediate vicinity instead of over an extensive map. Thus of two evils, the punchers chose the lesser. A mill of this description, because under human oversight from its start, was not likely to grow out of hand.

Tumbling K had already been twice constrained to mill its herd, so there was no novelty for The Duke and Bill in the ferment which Tex, Jinglebob, and Evans, by slicing through it on their horses, were rapidly reducing to quiescence. As soon as the hodge-podge ended, the tenderfoots and such of the Westerners as were not on night-herd duty took to their bed rolls.

In the morning, The Duke acted with Tex in tallying, and was so satisfactory that, throughout the remainder of the drive, he served as a tally man. Though useless as regards recalling brands and marks, sexes, weights, and ages, he had the merit of being always correct in his figures.

Some four days after the crossing of the Platte's north fork, The Duke and Bill, riding as usual far to one side of the herd and being separated some distance from each other, made discoveries of quite different sorts. And, it

being just before the time of the noon halt, each of them came back to the column and reported his find.

Bill, the first to arrive, came as rapidly as Woof could bring him; and, exultant in what he conceived to be the importance of his message, began loudly to deliver it as soon as he fetched within hearing of the punchers beside the halted wagon. The Duke, some minutes later, trotted onto the scene, made a few casual remarks, and then sat down to eat his luncheon. Not until later, and even then quite inadvertently, did he impart his information.

Bill, talking so fast as to be well-nigh unintelligible, announced: "Gee! there's a fellow out there who's been set down. He's on foot, an' has been set down. Did he tell me? No. He called somethin' to me; but, knowin' he'd been set down an' rememberin' what Cookey told me about set down men bein' usually tough citizens, I didn't answer. I lit out an' hustled back here. What do you think we better do?"

Several punchers had unsuccessfully tried to interrupt with practical questions, but thus far the only additional data was that in Bill's statement: "Gee! it was excitin'."

A moment later, he added: "If you'll only all stop tellin' me to shut up, an' askin' me where he is an' whether he needs help an' what's the matter with him, I'll tell you. He's over there somewhere. An' he's carryin' his saddle on his back; or rather tryin' to, for he keeps drop-pin' it. Gee! he's awful lame, sort o' staggers."

At this, Tex, Plummer, and Kansas Ed ran to their horses, glided into their saddles and, crowding around Bill, fairly shouted in unison: "Jus' where is he?" An embarrassed answer made no progress beyond "Out there. I was too excited to—" It had collided with an impatient

chorus of "Oh, hell!" At Tex's command of "C'mon, spread out," the three punchers rode rapidly away, their routes diverging as do the sticks of a fan.

Jinglebob, who had been squatting at the side of the fire away from Bill, had taken no part. Too distant to overhear any save the final and loudly spoken portion of the conversation, he had not bestirred himself beyond an impulsive twitch; because, as he well appreciated, the three top riders now mounting were competent to handle any exigency that related to a lone man.

A moment later, however, he obeyed instinct and let logic go by the board. The rescue party had just now disappeared over the top of a nearby ridge. Jinglebob, plumped toadlike on the ground and with his horse behind him, was engaged in stuffing bread into his mouth when faintly but clearly there sounded three shots evenly spaced. The wind disclosed, of course, the direction and approximate distance of their source. A startled gasp, a halo of flying bread crumbs; and, pirouetting without rising, Jinglebob, springing from a crouch, vaulted into his saddle. It was a flying mount, made in perfect form and at high speed; no stirrup used, and only a single hand touching either the saddle or the horse.

Spurs sank home. With a grunt and a snort and amid a shower of sparks and scattering tinware, Jinglebob's bronco ploughed through the cook fire; and, an instant later, was traveling as rapidly as quirt and steel could urge it.

As Jinglebob made his departure, Terril, assuming authority, called: "'Nough gone. Jinglebob 'll take care o' anythin'. Rest o' us stay with the herd." And thereby he prevented a general exodus. In the old-time West,

an appeal for help, particularly when manifested by three evenly spaced shots, was accorded the front rank in one's list of responsive obligations.

Bill looked inquiringly at Cookey, for he expected that the disruption of the fire, the wrecking of a coffee pot, and the battering of numerous plates would provoke indignation. And he was timorously curious to learn as to what extent his idol would be berated. Consequently it was a pleasant shock to hear Cookey say: "Good work! Can always count on Jinglebob. He'll take any chance, to help other folks. Mark my words, Bill; his death, when he dies, 'll be 'cause he's killed tryin' to rescue some poor devil. But he sure destroyed my kitchen."

In a half-hour, the rescue expedition rode into camp; Tex holding before him on his horse a badly damaged cowboy; Jinglebob bearing this cowboy's saddle and bridle. A reassuring nod from Tex informed the camp that the invalid's condition was thought not to be extremely serious. Jinglebob's statement, "Squeeze your clothes for the coffee I soaked you with," suggested a remedy, particularly when the statement was supplemented by "He ain't had food for several days."

Cookey had long since prepared for this contingency, and thus almost immediately the limp visitor was given a sip of stimulant. A cup of coffee slowly taken in combination with a morsel of food so much refreshed him, that soon he was able to talk without undue effort. And presently the newcomer, with a second cup of coffee on the ground beside him, volunteered:

"Thanks. Name's Lee Jackson from Goliad, Texas. Been bronc twistin' in Montana. Driftin' south for a job." A pause, an attempt to stretch a leg, a grimace of

pain, and then, with a furtive glance at his audience: "Night 'fore last—was ridin' night an' day to gain time—my pony acted up, ran away, stepped int' a badger hole, an' broke 'is leg. Throwed me hard 'nough to hurt me right smart. Ouch! hell! 'scuse me; tried to stretch my knee."

Another pause, another stealthy glance at his auditors, and then the visitor busied himself for a moment with his coffee. Meanwhile The Duke and Bill gazed at him from a distance; Bill actuated by sympathy and open-mouthed curiosity, The Duke piqued by indefinite suspicion.

The Duke possessed sagacity in making snap judgments of moral worth. Accordingly, when Evans stepped behind the wagon and out of the visitor's hearing, The Duke followed Evans and remarked: "Don't like his looks, he hasn't an open countenance." The Duke felt, at the instant, that his effort had been unappreciated inasmuch as Evans answered: "Right. He ain't. Howsomever, I never's knowed but one person with an open countenance. An Injun done it with an axe." Then Evans whispered: "Dunno. Somethin' funny. Seems like he's got onions in his character somewheres. Don't talk, jus' listen; an' keep Bill from spillin' any beans."

Bill, sooner than Evans or The Duke anticipated, was put to test; but the test so much took the wind out of his sails as to make him silent for some time. The newcomer, while finishing his second cup of coffee, had allowed his tired eyes to roam more freely about the camp. Presently espying Bill, his muscles gave a twitch, his face assumed a look of sudden recognition, and he musingly observed: "My Gawd!" Next and in a wearied voice

which, though devoid of anger, had a tint of scorn, he asked: "Ain't that the chap I fust seen? He sort o' quit me."

Tex, in his answer, had proceeded no further than "Yep," when the stranger once more reflectively announced: "My Gawd!" His eyes remained vacuously glued on Bill while Tex continued: "A pilgrim jus' out from states. Didn't know what to do, so come back for help. Meant all right, an' done his best." At this, the newcomer began a low-voiced and slowly uttered soliloquy: "A pilgrim! My Gawd! I ain't never seen one close by afore. A pilgrim! My Gawd! Didn't know what to do! My Gawd!" And then, brightening, he added: "'Scuse my talkin' to myself. Am still sort o' locoed from the bump I got. Feelin' better every second. 'Scuse me, Stranger over there, for sayin' you quit me. So you's a pilgrim. A pilgrim! My Gawd!" Bill, writhing more and more like a puppy, eventually mumbled something about getting himself a drink of water, stumbled over the full water pail that was immediately in front of him, and incontinently fled.

The invalid watched the departure, ruminatingly observed "My Gawd!" and then, resuming his narrative, went on: "Had to shoot my bronc. Left me afoot 'cause had only that one pony. Stripped 'im, an' started to pack my saddle an' headstall on my back; but I'd lost a lot o' blood from the cut on my neck you men fixed up when you foun' me. Got that cut when the pony, a-fallin', throwed me 'gin' a rock. I's got a lot o' broken tendons from flash ridin' in the past; an' two on 'em, one in each leg, got ripped bad when I hit the rock. So I wasn't in no shape for fast walkin'. Bimeby I starts in to fade out;

an' right then I sees the pilgrim, so my hopes riz. But, when he quit me, I was that mad I'd a-shot——"

Without raising his eyes but with an aiming of his voice at Bill's former seat, he grimly stated: "Hulloa! Pilgrim; if I hadn't been so weak, I'd a-killed——" Checking himself, he added: "I remembers now. He pulled out a few seconds back;" and, after a mirthless chuckle, concluded with: "Guess he's gone for help. A pilgrim! My Gawd!"

The final instalment of his autobiography was: "How far'd I travel afoot? Guess not more 'an six miles, all done piecemeal. Too groggy to notice much, but I was comin' due south a-huntin' for a ranch or for a trail that'd have people on it. Mebbe you folks think them three shots was prematoor, but I was beginnin' to hear angel wings a-flappin'."

Overhearing Tex advise Plummer "Better throw off the trail an' camp here. Ain't right to leave 'im," the dilapidated puncher struggled to his feet and essayed to walk a few steps. Swallowing the first of his words at a throb of pain, he pleaded: "Don't you folks wait on my 'count. You's done 'nough a'ready. If you'll give me some more grub an' 'nother cup o' coffee, I can hole up here by my lonesome. An outfit bound south 'll be 'long sooner or later. A couple o' days' grub, an empty can, an' some matches 'll stake me fine."

In answer to this, Tex suggested: "If you's fit to do that, you's able to ride the wagon. Don't want to force you none, but you'd better come 'long o' us. In day or so you'll be O. K. 'gain, an' we'll stake you to a bronc. You ain't got no fresh-broke bones 'cept possibly some cracked ribs. Knows that, 'cause we looked you over when

we found you. But you ain't in no condition to fork a hoss right now."

A moment later, Tex, after listening to an aside remark by Jinglebob, proclaimed: "All right. Plummer, don't throw off the herd. We'll pull out soon's Jinglebob an' Kansas Ed gets back. They's got to scout the trail a piece to find the lariat Bill dropped."

Behind the wagon and out of the stranger's sight, an attempt indignantly to say "I haven't dropped any lariat," was actually thus expressed: "I. Ouch!" Evans's foot had landed on Bill's toe, and a crooked elbow had lunged into the area below his ribs. A whispered "Shut up. You sure did lose it, along with a cigar store Indian an' a pearl necklace. Shut up, don't say nothin' he can hear"—this from Evans—and Bill at last got into his head that something was amiss. Ignoring the stranger's comment, "So the pilgrim sloughed 'nother play, my Gawd!" Bill, under pretence of fetching various objects, made numerous trips to the suspect's neighborhood.

However, before his efforts as a detective could warn the visitor that surveillance was in process, Evans called: "C'mon, Bill, lets you an' me back-track the trail an' help Jinglebob. When you gets back a ways, you'll remember where you last seen your reata." So presently Evans, having thus diplomatically abducted the latent source of danger, put himself and Bill onto horses and ambled along a retracement of the trail.

Bill at once plaintively inquired: "Why does that cow-boy hate me so? Swears every time he looks at me." The questioner's fear was dispelled, but his pride was injured by the honest reply: "Don't hate you. Ain't cussin' you. Is jus' amazed. Ain't played with tenderfoots afore, an'

prob'ly thinks you's the dumbest livin' thing he's ever saw—sort o' cross 'tween a load o' wood an' a wire fence."

After a pause, "Bill, you needn't take on so. His opinion's wuthless 'cept on twistin' o' broncs an' problewise on alterin' brands. The rest o' the boys is all strong for you. Your only trouble is not havin' 'nough experience an' not stoppin' to think. The Duke's all right, too, but he's brought his city sidewalks with 'im. This here new puncher—Jackson, he calls hisself—is low-grade ore mentally; don't you pay no 'tention to what he says 'bout you. His brains is gravel."

Bill devoted a few sentences to disparaging remarks about Jackson's appearance, and this disparagement was warranted. Albeit, Jackson was as well dressed as any of the Tumbling K men. He was no more uncouthly be-whiskered than they because, after successive days of enforced abstention from the razor, Tumbling K appeared flagrantly unbarbered. His hands were in much neater condition than those of any Tumbling K puncher because he, as a member of a specialized genus of cowboys, was vainglorious enough to advertise, by the immaculate state of his hands—the skin unbroken and as white as a young girl's—that he scorned all work which did not depend upon a saddle. And so he kept his hands encased in gloves. His figure was like those of Tumbling K's folks, athletic.

It was not so much the contour of Jackson's face, even the lowness of his brow, not so much the stealthiness of his expression, as it was an intangible and persuasive atmosphere that differentiated and belittled him.

As soon as Evans and Bill had moved beyond possibility of being seen from camp, Evans stopped his horse and

announced: "Right here's where we 'do nothin'. We's got to set an' wait. Let's tie our hosses to the brush, so's they won't back-feed int' Jackson's sight."

Though Evans was already squatted on his heels and complacently engaged in rolling a cigarette, Bill still remained in the saddle. His objection, "I thought we were going to help Jinglebob," provoked the answer: "Help nothin'. Wanted to pry you out o' camp afore you'd stuck a flea in that angel's ear. Wanted to come out myself, so's to get a report from Jinglebob that could be passed on to Tex 'thout the angel's spottin' it. Haven't any idea where Jinglebob is, but him an' Ed 'll come back this way 'cause they'll want to seem from camp to a-been stickin' to the trail.

"Why'd I call that bunged up brute an angel? Account o' that poetry you's heard tell of, 'bout an angel unawares. That's what we's doin', searchin' 'im afore we entertains 'im. If you does that to every incomin' angel 'thout him knowin' it, life's made a heap sweeter an' simpler.

"Why's we searchin' 'im? You freight-train galoot, 'cause we's netted some kind o' fancy bug, an' we's tryin' to find whether he's pink or blue. He's sure some sort o' rapsallion, ain't no common or garden rustler. We's got 'im, an' now we's endeavorin' to learn the name o' 'is grandmother.

"Us think he's a bad man? No, he ain't got the guts; but he smells bad morally.

"Why d'we think so? Oh, hell! acause— Here comes Jinglebob an' Kansas. They's found somethin', or they wouldn't be back so quick."

Bill had dismounted and was seated beside Evans,

watching him as he reflectively chewed a blade of grass and spat at a stone. Alongside of them, presently hove Jinglebob and Kansas Ed, who, halting their steeds and lazily cradling their right knees around their saddle horns, sat looking upon their campmates on the ground. Evans peered up inquiringly; and, at this, Jinglebob, nodding affirmatively, said: "Got it, mos' o' it. Found the hoss. 'Twas Hank's. 'Tain't noways like Jackson said. He 'pears to a-ried 'bout nigh everythin' 'cept his bein' a flash rider; but he ain't perjured none 'bout that, account the proof he's got in the condition o' his hands.

"Bud's somewheres in the play. That's sure thing. An' seemin'ly Hank is too. But what the play is, Ed nor me can't fathom. Reckon, 'stead o' tellin' you straight out, I'll go int' what you a'ready knows; an' begin at the beginnin', so's Bill, havin' the whole story, 'll avoid makin' any break to Jackson. Don't want him to put that siwash guest o' ourn int' suspicionin' that we's onto him.

Thereupon Jinglebob, addressing Bill, continued: "Oh! by the way, here's your lost lariat that we found. Look it over, so you can recognize it agin in case that Jackson kid mentions it. Better hang it on your saddle right now, so's none o' us 'll forget 'twas rescued in case there's anythin' doin' in camp when we gets back. Throw it in the wagon when Jackson ain't lookin'. That's where I got it from. It's one o' the regular stake ropes, an' 'll likely be needed tonight for a hoss."

This subject disposed of, Jinglebob added: "Whilst us four boys that located Jackson lyin' unconscious on the ground was a-tryin' to bring him to, I took a chassé for a short piece 'long his tracks. They came straight from the south. O' course, they was at times wobbly an' tend-

in' to stray antigodlinlike—that's 'cause o' his bein' hurt; but, takin' 'em as a whole, they run direct from the south towards the north. Hadn't time then to trail 'em very far.

"You remember he said how he'd left Montana, an' was movin' southerly. That didn't gee with what o' 'is trail I'd seen, an' so made all us four boys that found 'im feel kin' o' leery 'bout 'im. Also, him havin' called 'imself a Texan, he goes on, not only talkin' with Yank accent, but sayin' 'pony' in place o' 'hoss,' 'guess' instead o' 'reckon,' an' not showin' a single Texas star on any concha. That's worser nor treason to Texans' thinkin' for a Texas puncher not to be totin' stars, they considers it mos' as bad as his votin' republican.

"An' too, Jackson says gliblike, right at the first play, that he comes from Goliad; never mentions no county. Goliad's nice town, nice folks, I knows the place well; but it's been my experience that Texans, when outside o' Texas, 'less they hails from San Antone, always names their county an' state 'thout mentionin' no town. They jus' adds 'Texas' to the name o' one o' them three trillion acre counties, an' peaceably lets 'er go at that.

"The only sure Southern thing that there Jackson trotted out was his sayin' he was hurt right smart. That wordin', 'right smart,' is Southern lingo; but he prob'ly stole it.

"Regardin' more important facts; an' these is the real facts, all new to you, Sam.—Regardin' these, when Kansas an' me leaves camp this last time, we waltzes 'crost to where I'd first seen Jackson's sign, and follows it back, straight south a scant three miles. Right at the end o' them three miles an' pretty as a picture, all covered with

blood an' blow flies, lay a dead hoss. Been dead 'bout thirty-six hours. Jackson's foot-tracks started direct from that there hoss.

"The bronc's right fore leg was broke, but a shot done it; nary badger hole, like Jackson said it was. Wasn't no badger hole anywheres nigh. An' there wasn't no rock handy for Jackson to cut his head on, like he said he done. What cut his head must a-been his leanin' it agin' a bullet goin' past.

"No. Didn't learn sure who done the firin'—they was three shots in all—but found the spots it come from, an' can guess who done it. The hoss was killed by a rifle shot, Winchester '76 model. Went quarterin' through shoulder, an' stopped under skin on t'other side. Here's the ball. Hole in leg's the same calibre; an' so's, near as can remember, the groove on Jackson's head.

"Found three empty catridge shells, recently fired. Here they is, all o' 'em '76 Woostersheers—derved good gun 'cept didn't kill Jackson.

"Bill, you'd admire it over yonder; there's blood smeared ont' everythin', like you expected when you first come West.

"Sam, lend me your makin's. What I's got with me is gone. Need a smoke."

While Jinglebob was fashioning a cigarette, Evans remained silent, for he sensed that Jinglebob had yet more to tell. Evan's frown at Bill cut short that young gentleman's attempt at interruption; and so, in a moment, Jinglebob's voice was heard again.

"Sam, here's the funniest thing o' all. We back-tracks Jackson's trail for somethin' over a mile beyond the hoss, an' this 's what we ran ont'. We couldn't a-been mistook,

the sign was all so plain. Two hundred yards back on Jackson's trail——

"Let's take it t'other way. A mile or so back from the dead hoss an' travelin' towards it was the prints o' three cayuses: one o' 'em bein' the bronc that arterward was shot; one o' 'em bein' Bud's long hoss—print long an' narrow, break in front nigh hoof, an' all. The third bronc, we didn't savvy beyon' that this here quirt o' Hank's was lyin' clost to its track. The three cayuses was travelin' side by side, walkin' easy, not bein' pushed a-tall. At the end o' half a mile, Bud turns back, leavin' the other two men to keep on. When Bud turned back, he wasn't worried none; was in jus' a nice lope.

"You's wrong, Sam. O' course, Bud was there. That brute's his long hoss, the one he calls 'Helldevil,' an' wouldn't let nobody else 'cept himself ride it under no circumstances. It's the only thing that Bud's close-fisted 'bout.

"Well, the other two chaps, arter Bud quit 'em, mosied 'long together, both broncs walkin'. In the next half-mile they stops twice 'thout dismountin', prob'ly arguin'.

"At the second o' the places where they stopped they stayed quite a spell, for the ground's tracked up where the hosses was slowly millin' 'round in a space fifteen foot square. Right out o' this square an' leadin' straight to where he fell, was the tracks o' the dead hoss. Poor ol' Gimcrack! That was his name, Bill; an' he wasn't worth a dern when he was alive.

"Well, Gimcrack was heatin' his axles, was fairly flyin'; when pop goes the Woostersheer, down goes Gimcrack, an' off goes Jackson. Hank's hoss, if 'twas Hank, starts to follow—two o' his prints is atop o' Gimcrack's an' is gallopin'—then stops short, cavorts 'round a bit—

that's where we found the first catridge case—an' then he ballet dances over to a big flat rock that rises 'bout stirrup-high 'bove the ground. The man hops off ont' that rock, gettin' the advantage o' a steady shootin'-stand, an' incidentally leavin' no trail. It's smooth hard rock; nothin' to show size an' shape o' his foot, even his big toe. The hossprints indicates the bronc lunged back twice arter the man was off, was later drawed up to the rock; an', arter the man had mounted, loped away in the general direction he'd come from, but skirtin' his earlier trail. I didn't follow the sign. Hadn't time.

"Wait till I puff this cigareet. The rest o' the story's short. There was one empty catridge shell lyin', as I've said, where Hank's bronc first cavorted, an' two other empty shells was on the ground aside o' the rock.

"As Ed an' me figgers, Hank's first shot was from hoss-back. The firin' o' it's what made his hoss cavort. That shot hit Gimcrack's leg; an', o' course, downed him. O' the nex' two shots, both fired from the rock, one killed Gimcrack an' one grooved Jackson. Don't know which was the first o' 'em. Both o' them last two shots must a-been from the rock, like I said; for, in 'dition to two o' the empty catridge cases bein' there, the hossprints showed how the bronc had flinched each time the Woostersheer banged.

"Lucky shootin', but good. Hank's pretty fair with a rifle, though he's measly with a six-gun. Bill, if he ever aims a six-gun at you, you jus' snigger him to death."

Bill gasped. Quantrell was to have a rival during Bill's occasional nightmares. Bill was no coward, but he was eating raw meat that had been omitted from the diatetics of his home and his school.

And so, turning to Evans, he naively queried: "Can I

ask Jinglebob a question?" "Reckon so," said Sam, "you sure's had lots o' practice. Bring it out o' the stable, an' let Jinglebob look it over. He's a good judge o' questions." At this, Bill somewhat hesitatingly inquired: "What—what you going to do to Jackson?" He was both relieved and disappointed by Jinglebob's reply: "Not a derned thing."

Emboldened by the answer, Bill pressed on: "Why don't you? I don't know just what, but why don't you do something?" Evans interrupted with: "So you can put it in your diary, hey? Look here, Bill, you's got to help us by not gummin' the game. Don't say nothin' or do nothin' that'll give Jackson any hunch. Tell The Duke the whole story, an' tip him off 'bout bein' discreet."

"We don't know yet what we's stacked up agin'. It's prob'ly nothin' more an' a private scrap 'mong tin horns who's usin' us for a hospital, but we's got to play safe.

"Any danger o' Jackson shootin' us? Naw, he's too much o' a coward agin' decent men. Might shoot a yellow dog like himself, but nary any man. Wouldn't dare to, knows the boys'd telegraph him home.

"How do they send him home that way? Use their own rope, an' borrow a pole from the Western Union."

At a still further query from Bill, there came from Kansas Ed: "Bill, you askin' whether we's goin' to try an' either capture the shooter or have him arrested? We ain't goin' to do no capturin'; acause, if 'tisn't Hank, we don't want him nohow; an', if 'tis Hank, we don't want him a-tall. As for arrestin', folks here don't do that much; hemp's cheaper. An', 'cordin' to our way o' thinkin', there's nothin' to have him arrested for. He tried to do good to the world, an' missed it by only two inches.

"Jinglebob, you's right. We's been away from camp too long. C'mon, Boys, lets shuffle back to the herd."

As Bill and his three companions rounded the curve that had concealed them from the camp, his heart gave a throb and each of the three companions was galvanized into alertness.* Patently something unexpected by the group left at the chuck wagon had suddenly occurred. Two of this group were already mounted, four others were running toward riderless horses, all these six men whooping at the top of their lungs. So soon as all six were in the saddle, they began a scurry away from camp. Catcalls continued, however, to be launched by the people who were remaining at the wagon.

At the first alarm, the members of the returning party had sent their horses into high speed, but they promptly reined in when Jinglebob announced: "Slow, Boys. Nothin' serious there. Tex's laughin' his head off, an' even Jackson's chortlin'. Let's go in calmlike, so's Evans can easy slip the word to Tex 'bout what we found."

And thus, at a sedate pace, the detectives and their pupil ambled toward the camp. Once within earshot, they were greeted with: "Mavericks out there, two o' 'em. You're late." To Bill's amazement, his three conductors, who but a moment since were agreed on the necessity of promptly advising Tex, were now quirting their horses and speeding recklessly across country.

Bill, weighted by his knowledge, dutifully kept on his way to the wagon; and dismounting started toward Tex in order to impart, if possible, at least a portion of the news. Bill's wonder had immediate stimulation from the facts that Tex sputtered: "Ain't you goin' to use your hoss? I'll take him;" and thereupon, leaping onto

Woof's back, fled in pursuit of Jinglebob. The only explanation vouchsafed by Tex to Bill was the exultant "Mavericks! Yip! Yip! Mavericks! Whoo-up! whoo-up! whoo-pee!"

Bill turned to Owens, who had climbed to the wagon seat in quest of a more extensive view, and asked: "Cookey, what's the matter with the mavericks? You told me mavericks were only unbranded cattle. What's the matter? They don't belong to us, do they?" Cookey's answer, "They will soon," merged with the observation which Jackson, in blank astonishment, propounded to himself: "What's the matter with the mavericks? He's sure a pilgrim. A pilgrim! My Gawd!"

Presently Tex reappeared, triumphantly grinning and imperiously ordering "Hi, there! Cookey, throw me an iron. The boys got 'em both. Is this iron Tumblin' K brand? Yep. We'll be back in a minute; so hook to, an' get ready to roll."

Though Bill had early in his Western visit learned the bald fact that a so-called maverick was, according to the dictionary's definition, any unbranded adult or nearly adult member of the cattle family, he had not been long enough upon the range to appreciate the esoteric phase which, in practice, modified this definition. And that very evening Evans stated, "A maverick's a combination o' no brand, a Christmas tree, a ring 'roun' a rosey, deuces wild in a poker game, an insane asylum, an' two weeks in jail."

Evans, in this, was very close to truth. From the very outset, because ranching was conducted mainly in an unfenced country, it was found necessary to brand the live stock in order that the legal ownership of the animals might be ascertainable. Incidentally, the term brand,

though strictly meaning only the charred inscription upon a brute's hide, was frequently used in a sense that embraced both the inburned scar and also whatever "marks," if any, were knifed upon the bearer of the scar.

Calves being born unbranded, each of them was conceded to be the property of whoever owned the branded cow which the calf followed. Ordinarily the calf, unless very young, already had been branded; because usually, before it was old enough to desert its mother, it had been caught in the net composed of the round-up's circle riders.

An occasional motherless unbranded beast, however, would, for one reason or another, elude the circle riders, the knife, and the hot iron; and thereby, with "slick" (undecorated) ears and torso, would become a maverick; a pea on a hot griddle, an inviter for men to frolic and sometimes to battle, because whoever found a maverick was disposed to brand it as his own.

Although neither of our tenderfoots played a part in the actual capture of the two mavericks, The Duke was all-important in the prelude to it. When Bill and Evans, following on the heels of Jinglebob and Kansas Ed, had departed on their fictitious quest for a mythical lost reata, The Duke had usurped Bill's place as observer of Jackson, and so had sat for a long time watching the invalid recuperate and listening to the conversation in which Tex, Cookey, and Jackson, in front of a small and varying audience of punchers, intermittently engaged.

This conversation was, in the main, of little concern to The Duke, since the talkers avoided the very topic in which he was most interested, Jackson's accident. In avoiding it, Tex and Cookey were ruled by diplomacy; Jackson by stupidity, or habitual secretiveness, or by some

other motive. It was for the identity of this special motive, if there were one, that Tex, with Cookey's aid, was patiently angling.

For an hour or so the chit-chat continued, never in any vivacious manner or with any interesting development. It amounted to no more than that occasionally somebody would ask a banal question, make a trite remark, release a yawn, or clear his throat and thereupon expectorate. The affair naturally was conducted under the aegis of cigarette smoke.

Having exhausted the subject of the weather, the state of the grass upon Montana's ranges, and the relative merits of each shape of stirrup used in cattle land, Tex cast about for some new theme that might satisfactorily kill time and asked casually: "Many outside cows strayed ont' the ranges jus' north o' here?" Jackson's answer was: "No. All 'round here's local stuff, all branded either anchor, swastika, or quarter circle, nothin' else." At this, The Duke interjected: "Aren't you mistaken? There are two out here that aren't branded in any of those ways; for, come to think of it, they aren't branded at all."

At this, Tex, more from courtesy than interest, remarked: "Good reason they ain't branded yet. Local folks by special agreement don't hold their calf round-up till nex' week." And Plummer perfunctorily asked: "What brands was on the cows they's with?"

The Duke leisurely began: "They weren't with any cows. They were too old and too big for—" That was as far as The Duke was allowed to proceed, because Tex and Plummer, each aroused like terriers, shot questions rapidly. "Dead sure they wasn't branded?" "You say you's plum' sure?" "Did 'ye see both sides o' 'em plain?"

"You say they didn't run off, was hidin' in the brush; an', when you left, they lay down agin?" "They was together?" "How old was they?" "You don't know; then how big was they?" "As big as any animile we's got, you say, 'cept Quantrell?" "Gosh a'mighty! you say as big as General Grant?" "C'mon, Boys, mavericks! Yip! Yip! Duke, for the love o' heaven, exactly where is they?"

Fortunately, The Duke was able to give directions that were sufficiently explicit and reliable: "Three miles, a little south of west from here. They're hiding in a clump of high brush at the foot of the main bench. That clump is directly under a light spot on the face of the butte behind it. You can almost see the spot from here. It's in a straight line with three tall rocks all the same size and shape that rise from the plain. You can't mistake the rocks, for they're the only ones of that kind, and besides they look exactly like the spur that sticks out from Goat Island at Niagara Falls."

The final sentence of The Duke's gazeteer was merged with Tex's vociferous wail: "Gosh! I can't go. Forgot. Am trail boss, an' 'll have to stay with the stinkin' herd. Ain't it hell to be president? Good luck, Boys, you's that's goin'. Hope you break your derved necks. Mavericks! Yip! Yip!" This was followed by Tex's more sedately uttered: "Oh, hell! c'mon, Duke an' Cookey, let's us throw-outs set down along with Jackson an' practise cussin'."

This in general was the state of affairs when Bill and his three associates appeared from their expedition in search of a lariat that had not been lost.

During all of The Duke's discourse, Jackson, with

mouth open and with sagging chin thrust forward, had stared at him in fascination. In the subsequent brief period before Tex fled, Jackson, unobtrusively pointing at The Duke, inquired: "Is this here connected with the outfit?" After Tex's answer, "Yep. Brother to t'other pilgrim," Jackson remained silent for a while, rocking on his toes; and then, in an almost awed tone, he remarked, as though to himself: "Another pilgrim! Two in the same outfit! Two pilgrims! My Gawd!"

Not long after Tex had departed with the branding-iron, the two mavericks, imprisoned within a cordon of their captors, were warily conducted toward the herd. Each, displaying a freshly burned hip, was limping because of bruises from its upset by a lariat.

Under every man in the escort of capturers was a highly trained pony: making its progress in a series of caracoles; not by a trot, but by a festive and buoyant dance which was gentle rather than boisterous, mincing rather than strenuous. And, all the time, the little devils, by their neighing, their snorting, their slaving, and their impish glances toward the mavericks and toward each other, were in bronco language declaring: "Ain't it fun? Wish somethin' else'd happen quick."

Chary driving of the mavericks was a necessity; because, if they were rushed toward the herd, it might burst into fragments. And there was no knowing as to whether or not the two recently acquired brutes would readily adopt new playmates; for mavericks were apt to be Ishmaelites, wandering in singleness, occasionally in pairs, and much more rarely in larger groups. Because individualists, they were disposed to regard herds as oppressive and obnoxious.

Accordingly, when Tumbling K's two mavericks first sensed the nearness of the herd, their guardians watched them in order to guess whether there would be an amiable entry into the drove or a mad race across the plain. As the two brutes caught their first scent of the herd, they stopped short, lowed, pawed the ground, and forthwith resumed their travels, pausing momentarily now and again to sniff and moo. When eventually they sighted the drove, they repeated this performance; and then, breaking into a lumbering trot, advanced to within the outer fringe of cattle that, one by one, raised their heads from grazing and riveted on the newcomers a questioning stare.

Thereupon and after a few seconds' vacillation, the more forceful of the pair, having decided in favor of withdrawal, pivoted on his rear hoofs and attempted to swing into a pointing for headlong flight. At this, Quantrell, who was standing at the herd's extreme margin and but a few paces diagonally behind the rowdy, arched his neck and assumed an expression not unlike that employed by aged gentlemen when peering over the tops of their spectacles. Evidently what Quantrell saw did not meet with his approval. He moved with force and directness and struck the rotating maverick's body—stretched in horizontal tautness—so hard that even Shorty Brown was led to declare it “an imperial wallop.”

An inventory of the maverick's resulting losses would have included a trifle of blood, no small amount of hair and skin, a very large quantity of breath, and all of his initiative and egotism.

Another shake of Quantrell's head, whether as a preliminary to an intended second assault or as a mere authoritative gesture, had immediate effect upon this maver-

ick. He meekly ambled into the center of the herd and stayed there. His inseparable companion, the other maverick, accompanied him, halted beside him, gazed blankly at him, and then noticing that the battered friend was attending to his wounds, loaned a tongue; and, though keeping one eye prudently fixed in Quantrell's direction, diligently licked some six square feet of damaged anatomy. Henceforth the two erstwhile mavericks were not only members of the herd but members in good and regular standing.

Within a few minutes, there began the clatter of the marching herd, the bumping and rumbling of the chuck wagon, and the rising of the dust. Upon the Western plains of years ago, a progressive vertical shaft of lazily floating dust was a signal to all observers that a trail herd was plodding on its way.

CHAPTER IX

SNOBS AND A HORSE THIEF

THE delay caused by the finding of Jackson and of the mavericks amounted to perhaps four hours, but it was compensated by keeping the column moving along the trail until darkness fell. The facts, not only that the cattle had procured both rest and forage throughout the halt but also that Quantrell was of more than usual ambition, made for rapid marching.

The herd had been thrown off the trail; the cattle bedded; supper had been eaten; the first squad of the nightherd had ridden out to its station; and The Duke and Bill had settled themselves by the fire, there to oscillate between fascinated peeps at Jackson and reassuring stares at the squatting men of Tumbling K.

To the surprise of the two tenderfoots and particularly to the disappointment of Bill, neither Jackson nor any of Tumbling K's men let loose a melodrama. In fact, the conversation was for some time restricted to a discussion of the competing merits of baking powder and of sour dough as a basis for making bread.

Neither of the two pilgrims had thus far gained an inkling of that phase in the Old West's unwritten code which related to the treatment of such disreputable looking folk as had not as yet either committed definite offence against their entertainers or been known to have attacked a woman.

The attacker of a woman, whenever and wherever he

was caught, received immediate reprisal; and this, because of the nature of his guilt, took sometimes a form which Jinglebob termed a "fancy death." Whether staked on an ant hill in order to be eaten alive, or tied onto the back of an unbroken horse, or caught on his ankles by the reatas of two punchers galloping in opposite directions, the criminal's chances were small. Happily there were, in the entire history of cattle land, but very few instances of the atrocity which earned such punishment.

But toward mere disreputableness of looks, the old-time West was tolerant, though it reserved the right always to keep one eye open. As Jinglebob explained to Bill: "Merely acause you happen to notice that a maggoty appearin' gent's got a broken jaw an' is punctured with gun holes, though you can figger all you want, you musn't reach no conclusions till you's learned the true facts 'bout him. Till you gets them real facts, the gent, for all you know, may have strayed int' a church fair, an' fished his infirmities out o' the grab bag. An' anyhow he may like to be ventilated the way he is. Never interfere with nothin' that don't bother you."

This was the basis for allowing Jackson to remain in camp after discovery that he was lying. Nothing as yet done by him had injured Tumbling K. In addition, he was physically in bad shape; and the Old West, save when in a hanging mood, had a tender regard for invalidism in anybody.

The Duke and Bill, sitting beside the fire, were inwardly speculating as to why nothing happened, as to why Tumbling K's men, instead of putting Jackson to a strict questioning about his history, were willing to debate with him the time-honored question of which was the

more violent buckner, a Texan mustang or an Oregon cayuse. Furthermore, The Duke, despite his meticulous regard for social convention, his recollection of Hank's dismissal, and his remembrance of his own treatment on the trip's opening day, was beginning to wonder whether the punchers were not overzealous in their attempts at politeness.

The wondering had made but little progress before two men, without any previous hail, rode out of the darkness and into camp. Tumbling K's punchers had of course early caught the sound of the approach; but, in the absence of an halloo, they had supposed that the nearing people were two of their own nightherders coming upon some errand, although such a leaving of the herd would have been irregular.

When the newcomers, affronting by failure to announce approach, arrived within the illumination of the fire, every Tumbling K man glanced at them; and, without rising from his heels, froze into silence. Even Jackson showed resentment. Each of the visitors was dressed in the most exaggerated form of range fashion, sporting the widest of wide-brimmed hats, most florid of chaparejos, and innumerable conchas. The saddles and bridles of their horses were weighted with ornaments. The colors of a college showed in the men's neckerchiefs and in the browbands of the horses' bridles.

The elder of the garish visitors—elder, though clearly in his early twenties—began the conversation by demanding: "Have any of you men seen a loose horse?" Evans's whispered statement, "Did once when I was a baby," went no further than to the ear of Kansas Ed. And, except for this comment, there was no answer. The stranger,

hearing no response, brusquely inquired: "What outfit is this?" He obtained the instant reply in honied tones: "An Uncle Tom's Cabin show." Tex, having delivered the retort, turned his back upon the visitors; and silence by Tumbling K's folk continued. The spokesman for the interlopers coughed in an embarrassed way; and, after muttering to his companion, accompanied him in rapidly leaving the camp. Fortunately for the invaders, they left by the same route as that by which they had come. Had their course threatened to disturb the cattle, two blusterers might have been dragged from their horses.

As the visitors were disappearing, Tex gestured first at The Duke, next at Bill, finally at each of the retreating strangers, and then remarked to Jackson: "So long as you travels with us, you sure learns natural history."

At this, Jackson closed his mouth, which had hung open during his gaze at the strangers; pointed one of his thumbs at the two Kings, the other of his thumbs at the darkness; and, addressing nobody in particular, inquired: "Those'n any kin to these'n?" On Evans's assertion of "Them recent galoots? No, Siree, bobbity," Jackson fell into a temporary reverie, out of which he emerged with the seemingly heartfelt averment: "Four pilgrims in one day! Four pilgrims in one bunch! Four pilgrims! My Gawd!"

The next morning at dawn the camp was hailed, on this occasion by a cowboy. As in the waxing light he became able to see the brands on the remuda's horses, he commenced to give shouts of pleasure and amusement; and, by the time he had reached the vicinity of the chuck wagon, he was contorted with mirth. In fact, instead of dismounting, he virtually fell from his horse.

Teacup by name, he was known intimately, except for Jackson, by every Westerner in camp. After a proper meeting with The Duke and Bill and a curt introduction to Jackson, he forthwith began his story: "Gosh! 'scuse my laughin'. Wait, boys, till I can stop laughin'. Gosh! laughin' so it hurts. You sure must be the outfit that got raided last evenin' by a couple o' tempestuous jack-rabbits in gay chaps. Yes? 'Thought so. They's, betweenst 'em, the head o' the brand I'm tryin' to ride for; but there ain't much o' a brand. We's got an iron an' registration, an' that's 'bout all, 'cept me an' Ratty's sense o' immortal shame.

"What's Ratty got to do with it? Why, Ratty, brother o' Shorty Brown here, an' me, six weeks ago, had delivered some stock at Miles City; was paid off there; an', 'stead o' usin' sense an' clearin' out for Cheyenne, us two boys that same night went broke in a faro game.

"An old ranchman, Thompson back o' Miles, a nice old man who knowed 'bout us, said as how he was in trouble an' needed help. Said he had a couple o' rich nephews that had graduated from a tony college 'way back East a year ago; didn't know nothin' then; had been projeckin' 'round the world ever since; prob'ly knew less now; wasn't never any good; an', in order to amuse 'em-selves, had jus' bought a ranch.

"Said that all he savvied 'bout the ranch an' their gettin' it was in a telegram he'd received from the roosters two days afore an' tellin' him as how, havin' jus' landed in Frisco from Japan, they'd gone to an agent in Frisco an' bought the Jug Ranch over beyond here.

"General paralysis! boys. You ought to see the Jug Ranch. Ain't nothin' left but part o' the handle. She's

changed owners four times in a year; an', every time she's changed 'cept the one when she landed on us, a chip's been knocked out o' her. Our roosters bought 'er, so their telegram stated, on book count. No previous owner's been near her for over twelve months; an' the result's that, 'stead o' what the telegram described as 'proximately two thousand head o' mixed cattle an' some forty high-grade native hosses, we finds what? Four hundred an' ninety-eight objects on hoofs; nine on 'em pretendin' to be hossflesh, an' the balance havin' the 'fronterty to call 'emselves cows.

"Though all the calves in our section is branded, only sixteen o' 'em is burned with a Jug. Thirty-odd emaciated yearlin's carries that brand; most o' 'em steers, practically no she stock. Broadly speakin', our two-year-olds an' threes is disappeared. An', as for the rest o' the bunch, the best you can claim for 'em is they wear horns. Looks like an old ladies' home on an airin'.

"Them so-called forty high-grade native hosses consisted o' three wild-eyed, long-tailed brutes we found eatin' loco, five cuitans that's sprung in the knees, an' likewise one grandpap that's been too rheumatic to warrant his stealin'.

"The boys 'round here tell us the reason is that folks was tryin' to haze the former owners into quittin' the country, none o' them owners havin' proved 'emselves neighborly mannered.

"Somebody stake me to a cigareet. Don't hurry me. Wait till I've had a puff, an' I'll give the rest o' the humiliatin' details."

After a few whiffs of smoke, Teacup resumed his story.

"Returnin' to the subject o' Ol' Man Thompson, his

nephews' telegram stated that, though their new ranch was said to be fully stocked, they'd need a wagon an' hosses to carry 'em to it, nobody bein' at the ranch to come out an' get 'em. They asserts likewise that, though requirin' a cook, they wouldn't have no call for a teamster, acause their vallay could drive; an' next, as a sort o' P.S., they ends with: 'Request that, if not overburdenin', you get us as many cowboys as you consider necessary.' "

A few puffs of cigarette smoke, and then: "O' course, we all knowed by hearsay that the Jug outfit had blowed up financially, an' hadn't been showin' much under its brand; but that's as far as us or anybody at Miles had knew. It might own interests in other brands; there might be right smart left from wreckage, or there might be nothin'; quien sabe? But it was none o' Thompson's business. He wasn't intendin' to horn in none beyond what his nephews had asked him to do.

"The Ol' Man asserts that, acause his nephews would arrive at Miles in three days, he'd have to get considerable of a wiggle on in makin' things ready, an' 'cordin'ly would sure appreciate us to aid him. He said as how, though he was willin' to work hard in assemblin' stuff at Miles, he couldn't come down here an' start his pilgrims a-goin'. Couldn't do it for three reasons: first, he was too old; second, he wasn't feelin' brash; an', third, he was damned if he would. He said as how, him knowin' all 'bout his relatives, he didn't hanker none a-tall to lay eyes on 'em.

"Ol' Man Thompson told us that these radiant ky-otes was sons o' his favorite sister, who, bein' too high-toned for the U. S. A., was livin' in Europe. An' he said as how he, takin' for granted her fool sons hadn't notified

her they was goin' into ranchin', wanted, for his own protection, time to write her a letter an' to get an answer to it off her. He wanted, he said, to write her plain that he'd done everythin' he could that'd guide her dear sons proper in launchin' their business, but regretted as how he'd a'ready had to spend so many days at it, he couldn't be expected to do nothin' further for 'em in future. He adds to us that, soon's he got from his sister a letter appreciatin' what he'd done an' so puttin' her on record, his dear nephews, for all he cared, could break their derved necks.

"Said he was up agin' it for fair, that he needed two punchers to herd his family vermin till the letter come from his sister; an' that every dependable cowboy he knew 'round Miles was ridin' a permanent job, an' wouldn't slough it for jus' short insanity work.

"He said it'd take only two months to write an' get an answer, an' he fair begged Ratty an' me to help him out. Offered us double wages, if we'd do it. He fed us some liquor; an' so, partly out o' sympathy an' partly 'cause o' rum, we says 'Yep.'

"Thompson's one chore bein' to arrange for transportin' his glandered kin to their ranch, he throwed us an' him enthusiastic-like into fillin' the order. We all o' us hustles 'round, hires a cook, an' gets a wagon, work hosses, an' saddle animals. Also we stocks up with grub, eatin'-tools, cookin'-ware, an' blankets.

"When selectin' the live stock for the pilgrims to 'nigger brand,' I says to the Ol' Man: 'How good can these blamed tenderfoots fork?' an' he says to me: 'Never thought o' that, prob'ly none a-tall. Never mind the vallay, the average stuff we's a'ready got's good 'nough

for him. But, for them onery nephews o' mine,' he says, 'get 'em each a nice, refined, real gentle, lady's hoss for ridin' now, an' likewise a jubilant gut-twister for when the time's up.' That's jus' what he states.

"Say, boys, ain't aimin' to talk you to death, specially as you's mebbe in a hurry to pull; but I'm nearin' the end."

In compliance with requests of "Don't stop," "Go on," and "Ride 'er out," Teacup continued: "'Bout them hosses for the monkeys— So I glided over to Ainslee where I knowed there was a widow with two little girls, six an' seven years old, that had pet ponies they was ridin' regular; them two ponies bein' tame as kittens, but spunky. When they was loose, they'd follow the little girls 'round, a-beggin' for sugar an' a-rubbin' their noses agin' 'em. Little girls had named one o' 'em Columbine an' t'other Rosebud.

"'Twas a shame to transfer them nice animals from them children to a brace o' cannibals, but had to be did. We couldn't endanger them pilgrims at this stage o' the game; an' the widow, bein' poor, wasn't able to resist three times what money the ponies was worth. It hurt to do it, for the little girls was a-cryin'; but I promised to do my best to get the ponies returned to 'em, an' the Ol' Man bought 'em candy 'nough to keep 'em sick for a month.

"Changed the ponies' names, figurin' their real ones was too mild for them fierce tenderfoots. Rechristened 'em Apache an' Warrior.

"For tonic stuff, we picks up two solid-colored bays, believin' that solid colors can commonly stay highfalutin' longer 'an mixed colors. Earwig an' Tarantula, them's

their entitlements; got 'em both over to Glendive. Earwig, though he's only a straight-away pitcher, does sure throw a mean back; while Tarantula's got a corkscrew that he reverses up in the air.

"Howsomever, arter Ratty an' me had been sweatin' blood under them giddy nephews 'bout fifteen days, we finds a puncher bound up the trail for Miles, an' we sends detailed word by him to the Ol' Man jus' how things was goin'; that Ratty an' me, though sinkin' fast, was still breathin'; an' that, in view o' the way his pale pink relations was treatin' us an' all the neighborin' ranchmen, it'd be appreciated if he could send down one hoss that could outworsen Earwig. Said we wouldn't use the new hoss 'less we had to, but we wanted to sure have an ace in the hole. We adds what was true; that things was gettin' serious an' that, if it wasn't that folks knew 'bout his waitin' to hear from his sister, an' he wasn't so much generally respected, his rompin' kin wouldn't be allowed to stay in the country.

"Day afore yesterday, the Ol' Man gets comfortin' news to us. He's sendin' down an unusually rambunctious brute, name o' Putrid. The parties that owned the brute wouldn't sell him at first, sayin' they was savin' him to hist an Englishman they begrudged. But the Ol' Man appealed to their patriotism by statin' that two Americans needed the treatment worse an' they was his nephews. An', when he told 'em what his canaries was like an' that the merskeeters was plannin' to settle in the neighborhood, the parties gladly give up the hoss. The cowboy that brought us the word, he handed us a letter from the Ol' Man. It ended with: 'The new hoss is bad. I've seen him work. Remember, they's my nephews. Don't

deliberately hurt 'em; but, usin' your own judgment, let nature take its course an' go as fur as you like. They's been cantankerous since they was born.'

"That's the kind o' an outfit, if you call it an outfit, that Ratty an' me's tied into at present. The tin horns don't know nothin' 'bout live stock or the laws o' the range, an' is arrogant an' contemptuous to all o' the few people there is in this section. When that sister's letter comes, the local folks 'll riz up.

"Yesterday, we found that one o' our hosses had strayed. 'Stead o' lettin' Ratty or me hunt it, the two lobos told us both to stay with the vallay, an' that they'd do the trailin'.

"Why stay with the vallay? Repair job. Account o' his gettin' snooty last week, Ratty put him on Earwig for one jump. Somebody's had to stay with him since.

"Well, the siwashes, arter runnin' 'round aimless all day, got lost in the darkness. Then they seen your light, an' butted int' your camp. Noticin' first only one man in their excitement an' suddenly rememberin' their lost hoss, they acted natural an' was bad mannered. All to a hop, they appreciated they was in a crowd o' armed men. Hadn't never seen a big oufit afore. Got panicky, an' fled. They bein' too tired to use their reins an' so do mis-directin', their ponies brought 'em straight home. Routed me out o' my bunk so's I could come over an' make peace. They's afraid to stay in the house. Is hid in the brush 'bout a mile back o' it, waitin' for you to move on.

"Am sure glad it's you boys, an' not a strange outfit. Was a little worried acause didn't know who it'd be.

"Now that I's talked you blind, I formally presents the apologies o' all the mortal remains o' the Jug Ranch.

"Sure. Long as you asks me to, I'll reluctantly stay to breakfast. Planned to anyway, soon's I seen who the outfit was.

"Heard you-all was on the way up. Tell me 'bout things."

After he had swallowed a cup of coffee, Teacup said: "Shucks! you don't want to learn no more 'bout our troubles. Personally, I'd a heap rather listen now than to gab. All right; if you really wants to hear more, I'll unwind the rest o' the tale. It's a sad one.

"Well: afore the nephews' train pulls into Miles, we was waitin' down to the depot; me, Ratty, Thompson, an' a considerable wad o' the boys. The boys was all behavin' quiet an' nice, acause, in addition to respectin' the Ol' Man as a big rancher, they sympathized for him; they knowin', as they did, that for the first time in his life he was showin' his worries—an' he was worried bad 'bout his approachin' kin. It was pathetic to see the best poker player in eastern Montana a-walkin' up an' down in front o' the depot, a-wipin' beads o' sweat off his brow, his face twitchin' an' advertisin' what was goin' on in his mind.

"He kep' peekin' 'long the track, to see if the train was comin'; an', all the time, he was grabbin' the ends o' his mustash, pokin' 'em into his mouth, an' chewin' 'em like they was hay. Then he fidgety-like remarks: 'Boys, she's late. Time for 'nother drink;' an', at that, we'd all drift over with him to the saloon. The frequency he was imbibin' showed plain he was anxious. Ordinarily he was a good honest drinker, but he never was no inlet; an' so his present voluminous toperin' was, under the circumstances, sort o' affectin' to the boys.

"Well, bimeby the train rolls in; an', from the facts

that grinnin' heads began to pop out o' car windows an' that the engineer was holdin' the whistle open, we was warned to expect somethin'. It came.

"Fortunate, the conductor had early learned from the gophers that they was nephews to Thompson an' that they was meanin' to go into ranchin' near Miles; an', him sizin' up the situation an' bein' a warm friend o' Thompson's an' bein' a derved good railroad man on the side, he goes through the train an' makes an' explanation an' an appeal to all the Westerners aboard. An', at every station the train stops at, he likewise pleads to all the folks that gets on. 'Cordin'ly, the hyenas arrives at Miles 'thout havin' been mauled; an' was conceiteder 'an a flea full o' blood.

"Out o' one o' the Pullmans come the nephews, the vallay, a lot o' 'go-easters,' six scatter guns, an' ten rifles. No, them lizards didn't look a-tall like ordinary, standard-bred nephews; they 'peared more like aurora borealis that had been varnished up. Them idjuts was already dressed in their full regalia, havin' bought it in Frisco; an' it was sure some cowboy costume.

"The Ol' Man took one glance at 'em, let out a groan; an', arter a sort o' sad an' appealin' look at the crowd, he snook. Went over to the hotel an' peeked out the window. But the boys, knowin' he had cholera morbus in his soul, they stood by him fine. One o' 'em goes up to the engineer an' tells him: 'Can your spavined whistle, Miles is receivin' her dead.' An' the others, hidin' their feelin's at the impudence o' the tenderfoots' handin' 'em plunder to tote, lugs everythin' over to the chuck wagon. In 'dition to all the dofunnies I's listed a'ready, there was six postage stamp saddles, seven Saratoga trunks, an'

eight large cases o' ammunition. Ain't heard from Miles specific yet; but me an' Ratty, from what we found in the wagon arter we left town, reckons that whatever was in the street that night an' wasn't screwed down we got.

"Long afore dawn, Ratty, me an' the cook hooks up the teams, saddles the ridin' stock, bunches the cavvy, grabs a breakfast, routs out the nephews, an' is all set to roll. The oldest o' the two tenderfoots, he waltzes up to Rosebud, grabs roughlike on her reins, an' tries to mount from the wrong side. She, under her new name o' Warrior, up an' bites a slice out o' his hand; an', with that, Columbine—no, I mean Apache—lets out a bawl, an' plants her two hind tootsies kerplunk in the middle o' his back. That settled his hash for any ridin' a hoss, so he clumb ont' the wagon. His brother weakened at this, an' followed him ont' the wagon. Vallay gets int' the drivin' seat, the cook mounts a bronc o' his own, me an' Ratty swings int' our saddles; an' so, 'thout nothin' 'cept a farewell moan from the Ol' Man an' a subdued snigger from the crowd, we pulls out.

"Only mean thing any o' the boys done was to smuggle a bugler from the fort; an', as we was passin' the last house in town, an' me, Ratty, an' the cook was congratulatin' oursel's, one o' the windows gently riz up; an', playin' his derved old instrument soft so's the officer o' the day wouldn't hear it, that low-down swattie sounded-off taps.

"We shoved along, makin' fair mileage but storin' up a heap o' bad feelin'; the tenderfoots enthusiastically scoldin' the cook mos' all o' the time. Fourth day out, right afore the pilgrims was ready for breakfast, the cook, turnin' to us, says private: 'Long's you boys has got two

outlaw hosses to herd in the string, mebbe you can't feed yoursel's, pervided I quit.' An' we answers: 'Sure can. Cowboys can always take care o' 'emselves; 'll eat the outlaws, if necessary.' An' then he says to us, him havin' cooked up a whale o' a breakfast, 'Is you two boys a'ready et?' An', when we says 'You bet,' he says: 'Is sure you's et all you can possibly want?' On our agin answerin' 'Yep,' he, remarkin' that the tenderfoots ain't had nothin' so far an' he at the same time startin' nothin' rough, he turns face to the pilgrims; kicks over the fryin' pans an' Dutch oven; upsets the coffee pot; yells, in a dignified way, 'Dern you, I'm through;' hops on his bronc; an', blithely singin' the last verse o' 'Rosalie,' lopes int' the back-trail for home.

"From then on, the vally done the cookin'. He had to; acause, whenever the tenderfoots wasn't raisin' his wages, Ratty was quirtin' him on the sly.

"The weasels has got a lot o' friends comin' out from the East to visit 'em in the fall for the shootin'.

"Ratty an' me'll stay till our contract time with the Ol' Man's up at noon on the second o' next month. Ratty's keepin' the clock oiled, so's it won't lose no time. That mornin', we saddles the outlaws— What's that? Can only us two do it? Dunno, but eleven men's volunteered to be there an' help us. At exact plum' noon, 'thout stoppin' to kiss the pilgrims good-bye, we's goin' to pour an emetic int' the coffee pot, shoot a hole in the clock, an' leave."

He hesitated a moment; and then, in summary of all that had been said, he rapped out: "Why don't the Lord put fur on people like them folks so's we can hunt 'em in the winter time?"

Teacup had ended his story, and was about to mount and depart, when Tex halted him with: "Don't hurry. We-all is goin' 'long with you." Teacup's dubious look evoked from Tex the grinning sequel: "Honest, we won't tear up nothin'. Jus' want to show The Duke an' Bill a ranch in full swing. They ain't never seen one yet. Don't want 'em ignorant when they comes to approach our little shebang in Montana."

The first part of Tex's statement had been intended to suggest no more than that Teacup, until he should branch off to the Jug Ranch, would use the very route along which Tumbling K was to move. But Teacup's glance of dismay had created a sudden impulse to carry mild bedevilment into the enemies' country.

Though Teacup had every reason for confidence that there would be no attempt to do more than to tease, he realized that any indiscretion by his caddish employers might tempt the punchers' sense of humor into practical jokes. Thus he got no pleasure from Tex's declaring: "Duke, no matter what Teacup says, you an' Bill ought to see this here Jug Ranch. It's famous for its sky. Said to have more sky per acre o' land than any other ranch in Wyomin' Territory. Shut up, Teacup. We's comin', anyhow.

"What's that, Duke? Why did these tenderfoots want to buy a ranch when they didn't know nothin' 'bout it or 'bout ranchin'? Search me. Only chimpanzees understand tenderfoots' reasonin'. I reckon 'twas so's they could begin at the top. There's always room at the top for aspirin' young men. Scum always rises.

"C'mon, Boys, line out the herd; an' lets roll 'long."

Teacup fled in order to warn Ratty that a visit was imminent.

Although the detour would add five miles to the length of the normal march for the day, the herd was switched onto a course which, parallel with the proper one, passed in the immediate vicinity of the Jug outfit's buildings. On nearing them, Tumbling K's folk were greeted by the heads of both Ratty and Teacup poked from out of the door of the bunk house. Tex and Jinglebob, detaching themselves from the cattle, rode to these punchers; and, when doing so, had no particular object. The whim that caused the detour had already been satisfied by its making.

Ratty's entreaty of "Please don't raise hell, for all you'll bother is me an' Teacup, an' we's anyhow got troubles enough," would have been successful, if the oft-discussed valet had not seen fit to inquire from his bed in the bunk house: "Hi say, Ratty. Who's hout there, the rowdies my gentlemen hencountered last hevenin'?"

Smiles such as a cat is supposed to give at the sight of a mouse spread over the faces of Tex and Jinglebob. They both had begun to drop lazily from their horses to the ground when Ratty, in a pleading voice that carried a hint of alarm, cried: "Don't rough him. Honest, he's good an' sick." And there came from Teacup the corroboration: "Ratty ain't lyin'. He's sick bad."

Whereat, Tex and Jinglebob swung into their saddles, intending an immediate and quiet departure. But, as their bodies lurched through the air, they saw a padlock upon the closed door of the ranch house, the owners' quarters.

The smiles returned. Tex grunted: "Puttin' locks on, is they!" and then sharply queried: "Anybody into the ranch house?" On being told "Nope," he drew his six-gun; and fired at the lock, which, by its mere presence,

violated the cattle country's hospitality. The distance was so long that he missed; but, riding with Jinglebob into closer quarters, both of them shot and hit. Two other Tumbling K punchers, attracted by the sound of firing, arrived upon the gallop; but, as no particular target remained, they had to content themselves with shooting holes through the closed door. The suggestion made by somebody in the group that each perforation represented a card left in response to the pilgrims' visit of the preceding night was so infectious that, before the din was ended, every one of Tumbling K's punchers had been given opportunity to absent himself temporarily from the distant herd and to contribute his five bullets.

When the sixtieth hole had appeared in the door, Tex slowly rode toward the bunk house, his face clouded and his head wagging in disapproval. There was no need for him to announce to either Ratty or Teacup what the grievance was. They knew, and they promptly cleared themselves through Teacup's disgustedly stating: "Ugh! our pilgrims seem to be puttin' on locks in 'dition to airs. That lock must a-been placed this mornin' whilst I was over to your camp, an' Ratty was dosin' the sick man. We ain't seen it afore. The pelicans 'pears to have come out o' their hide hole for the purpose, an' to a-sneaked back agin."

The patent honesty of the speaker's chagrin resolved all Tex's personal resentment and, in the friendliest manner, he announced: "Time's passin'. Reckon the cows ought to be wrigglin' 'long. Hope we didn't disturb the invalid none. So long, Boys." With that, Tex, sending his horse into a lope, overtook his retreating companions; and presently a normal cloud of dust was once more rising above the herd of Tumbling K.

That evening at suppertime, Jinglebob began in good faith: "Duke, hope you ain't disappointed by gettin' int' a country with so many people into it. This is the fourteenth day we's been with the herd, an' we's sure seen a mob o' folks since we started. Lets count 'em; the Colorado trail cutter, the U. P. freight train way off in the distance when we crossed the track, Jackson here, the two men on the horizon day afore yesterday, the five at the Jug Ranch, an' the prints o' Hank's an' Bud's hosses, all in 'dition to whatever Cookey seen at the ferry. Gosh! that makes twelve, not countin' what Cookey seen at the ferry; though, o' course, out o' that twelve one was the freight train, five we didn't get to talk to, an' two was jus' sign. It'll be crowded the same way for a spell above here; and then you'll like it; for, at the Ol' Man's new ranch, you prob'ly won't see nobody for weeks at a stretch—jus' cows, silence, an' emptiness. That's the right sort o' country to live in, an' enjoy yourself."

The Duke, essentially urban in his tastes and somewhat taken aback by the information, asked a few disconsolate questions, and then completely subsided when Jinglebob replied: "You askin' how do the folks up there pass the winter? It passes itself. They jus' sets 'round an' shivers, leastwise 'less they's got gumption to hustle out an' work to keep warm. But I sure likes the thought o' bein' there this season. Got a buffalo coat, some German socks, an' a lot o' hope."

Although Jinglebob's conversation with The Duke was not heard by Jackson, another topic broached at suppertime caught Jackson's attention and held it in thrall. Kansas Ed had remarked to Abilene Ike: "You lovesick Romeo, you likely 'll be needin' money to get married on, when all you Elkhorners is laid off at the end o' this

drive. Now, don't try to stall me. O' course you's in love, gettin' mos' as slushy as Shorty Brown. Here you is sayin' as how's you ain't hogtied by Cupid; an' all the time you's totin' Mame's tintype, an' takin' jus' as good care o' it as though 'twas a tooth-brush, if you owned one. An' you knows you's the only one that Mame freshens her spit-curls for, when you comes into her eatin' house. Shucks! G'wan! But I ain't aimin' to discuss turtle-doves now, I'm talkin' slick ears."

At the term "slick ears" (unbranded range horses), Jackson gave a knowing smirk; and, by the time Kansas Ed had uttered a few more words, was alertly attentive.

Kansas Ed's arrestive story ran in this wise: "When you's laid off, why don't you drift back to the Jug Ranch? If Teacup an' Ratty's still hauntin' the country, you can get a short but very payin' job off 'em. What kind o' a job? Twistin' ownerless broncs, you derved fool; did you think it was raisin' bananas? Oh! 'scuse me for bein' so outspoken. Come to think o' it, you mebbe didn't hear Teacup mention them fifty slick ears that him an' Ratty's marked down, an' is holdin' in storage out o' sight o' their pilgrims? No? Then I'll do you a good turn an' tell you 'bout 'em. They's no use to me, on account I'll have to stay up in Montana.

"They's all in the same general locality an' way back out o' sight from the ranch. A few o' 'em's rangin' solitary, whilst the balance of 'em is in three bands. They don't show no intention o' driftin' out o' the country. Teacup an' Ratty hopes, when time for quittin' the pilgrims arrives, that them hosses 'll still be decoratin' the scenery; an' 'cordingly they's keepin' their eyes peeled for a third puncher to take in on shares in the deal. It'll

call for three men to corral them cayuses an' herd 'em eastward out o' the territory."

In response to The Duke's question, "Who's horses are they?" Kansas Ed answered: "Belongs to Ratty an' Teacup. Oh! if you'se goin' to look as skeptical as all that, I'll tell you the truth. They belongs now to a syndicate composed o' Ratty an' Teacup as one owner; t'other two owners bein' the real owners, whoever they is in Colorado or Nebrasky, an' likewise some innocent hoss thieves. Ratty an' Teacup is what you might describe as the man-agin' owners; they bein' in sole possession o' the stock, an' likewise bein' the closest to the Dakota line. Ratty an' Teacup is convinced that the only way to punish them hoss thieves an' to reward the rightful owners is for 'emselves to run the stock over into Dakota or Minnesota, sell it, and keep the money."

As Kansas Ed finished, Sam Evans said to Bill: "So you's afraid one o' the rustlers may shoot Ratty an' Teacup. Nobody'd shoot a lovely cowboy with as sweet a smile as Teacup's got, leastwise not if Teacup shot first. He's quick an' straight. An' Ratty's too thin to hit."

Cookey, appealed to by the bewildered look of the two pilgrims, took upon himself to give them a more lucid explanation. He told them of the situation, his comments setting forth three main propositions as follows:

First, there was in operation a more or less well organized machine for stealing horses in eastern Colorado, northwestern New Mexico and the westernmost sections of Nebraska and Kansas, and for spiriting these horses northward into Wyoming, and thence eastward, past the Black Hills, to a market among the wheat-growing farmers of Dakota and Minnesota. The men comprising the ma-

chine, though presumably few in number, were, in the main, efficient. But they sometimes made blunders, and seemed to have made one in this case. Ordinarily driving the stolen animals under cover of night, the thieves, whenever wishing to hold their illicit live stock for any length of time at a particular place, were wont to make use of such of other people's corrals as were situated beyond view from any frequented trail. Corrals used for this purpose and belonging to conniving owners were, in the argot of the cattle country, termed road houses. Rustlers were sufficiently astute, however, not to ignore the corrals that were possessed by honest folk. And accordingly, whatever round pens on virtuously conducted ranches lay far from the ranch house were not infrequently, without their proprietor's knowledge, devoted to temporary holding of contraband. Also inclosures on abandoned ranches were invaluable to horse thieves.

In the present instance, the rustlers had been seemingly so stupid as not yet to discern that the Jug Ranch had become retenanted, and had continued to bring, from time to time, additional horses onto the local range, with the object of assembling such a band as, from its size, would promise material profit when driven far eastward to the farmers. The imposing of brands on slick ears and the altering of scars on already branded animals would be merely incidental tasks to be performed before the drive began.

Cookey went on to explain the attitude of public opinion toward stolen live stock. As between the rightful owner and the thief, the owner, unless unpopular and unless the theft had been performed for purpose of hazing him, would be accorded general sympathy and assistance in his effort to regain his property.

As soon, however, as the filched animals left the possession of the thief, provided that they did not pass into the custody of one of his confederates, public opinion was apt to become divided. If the innocent purchaser were an opulent ranch owner, even though vastly liked, he would be expected immediately to surrender the loot. Not so, however, if the guiltless purchaser was a ranch owner of very limited means and of marked popularity, or if the man who had been robbed of the live stock was of such wealth that the loot amounted to no more than a chip from his herd. In this latter case, although the loser of the animals would, if he insisted, recover his property, he would, however high the previous regard for him, promptly forfeit numerous friendships.

Wherefore, many a cowboy, though he might be upright in all his dealings with ranch owners except in the matter of mavericks, has nevertheless taken delight in attempting to pilfer from thieves whom he disliked. An effort of this sort was sure not to offend the public's conscience, and withal it had a humorous savor.

Cookey's third and final topic was cowboy clannishness. So strong was the class consciousness of punchers, that often they would studiously withhold information from a person who was not of the occupation they followed; doing so, not to protect another and erring cowboy, but solely because, through pride of calling, they wished to escape some additional stigma upon their vocation. As Cookey said: "For instance, take Jinglebob. He's as honest as the day is long; but, when it comes to the question of his possibly peachin' on any buckaroo, no matter who the puncher is, Jinglebob remembers to forget. In his instinctive exercise of tacit defence of other folks he's a cross between a race horse and a clam."

To all this, Cookey added: "Now, Duke, you know as much as I do 'bout the situation at the Jug Ranch. The boys don't tell me everything, not by a long shot, for I'm not listed by 'em as bein' a puncher. Next to your Uncle Jim, they're the closest friends I've got; but, despite their fondness, they always will consider me as being a poor blind candidate, rather than as a fellow craftsman in full standing."

As soon as this conversation ended, Jackson buttonholed Tex, and for a half-minute eagerly whispered questions to him. The inquiries, though inaudible to everybody except Tex, were revealed by the answers they produced. Tex, having no reason for concealment and speaking loudly enough to be heard by all his companions, said sympathetically: "Am sure Ratty an' Teacup 'll take you into cahoots. They needs a peeler to help 'em. O' course, we can freight you to 'em, if you's able to ride; 'll be glad to. You'll know by mornin' whether your breaks is glued up enough so's you can start; an', if you's O. K., we'll lend you a bronc an' send a man 'long with you so's to bring back the hoss.

"Sort o' relieves my mind, for I've been unsuccessfully tryin' to spell out a job you could take soon as you wanted it. Couldn't conjure up none, 'cause you seemin'ly lim-its yourself to flashin' cayuses, whilst our outfit's knittin', both here an' up to the ranch, is done most largely with cows."

For this kindness in seeking to provide employment, Tex deserved no special commendation. He was merely a typical product of the old-time cattle range, and he was making no effort beyond that which any decent old-time cattleman would have made. Upon the cattle range of

years now long bygone, a sure way to obtain a position was to be able to fill it. An almost equally sure way was merely to need it, inasmuch as the Old West was very tolerant to indigent people. Many a man won his place as cook at a ranch solely because he needed wages and could not ride.

Jackson discovered, when morning came, that he was able to mount a horse. As he dropped into the saddle a glint of pain swept across his face but he did not whimper. Then he dismounted and contentedly squatted for his breakfast. Tex casually suggested: "Duke, how'd you an' Bill like to 'company Jackson to the Jug Ranch? We'll stake you to a reata to tow back his hoss." Before The Duke could answer, Bill enthusiastically announced: "Gee! of course we will."

Thereupon Bill, realizing that Jackson's baggage consisted of only a torn slicker, ran to the wagon and returned with a blanket which he had pulled from his bed roll. As he was clumsily trying to fold it Jinglebob went to his aid. A whisper from Bill; and Jinglebob, with an approving nod, gave the bit of bedding a sausagelike form and fastened it under the tie thongs at the rear of Jackson's saddle.

Jackson did not see this, but when, as time came for breaking camp, he started toward the horse assigned him, he hesitated an instant because the presence of the blanket suggested that whoever had done him the kindness of saddling had made an error of some sort. Before he could speak, Jinglebob, by a smile, a friendly nod, and a thumb snapped in Bill's direction, tacitly told him the story. Bill, in unaffected shyness, had hidden behind the work teams, and so he received no thanks. Jackson, gaz-

ing first at the blanket and then stolidly at wherever Bill might be, merely murmured, as though to himself: "So he done that, an' he done that for me. An' him a pilgrim! A pilgrim! My Gawd!"

A few moments later, Jackson, The Duke, and Bill, riding abreast, started southward, while the herd and its suite began its day's march.

There was little conversation among the trio bound for the Jug Ranch. Bill was somewhat overawed by the responsibility suddenly thrust upon the King family, the responsibility of being sole hosts to a presumptive horse thief. The Duke, by reason of having in mind no precedent to guide him in the present situation, was mute. Jackson was uncommunicative because, in addition to his native reticence, he was, as he himself eventually admitted, "consortin' with a frolicsome bunch o' aches and pains."

Jackson, however, was no quitter. From the very nature of the cowboys' vocation, no cowboy could be a quitter; or, more logically to state the proposition, no quitter could be a cowboy. Though a puncher might be morally a coward, he had always physical courage. He had to. Otherwise, he would not emerge alive from the blizzard, the desert or the quicksand, would not be able to make solitary outridings when starvation or thirst was haunting, would not even be able to stick to the back of a bronco that was "slattin' its sails."

In due time the party arrived within hailing distance of its destination. At the first note of Jackson's howl, Ratty and Teacup appeared at the door of the bunk house and, an instant later, launched a welcoming answer. The trio rode straight to the bunk house and Jackson dis-

mounted there. Bill and The Duke remained in their saddles; Bill because he, for a reason he had seen fit not to disclose, was anxious to return to the herd; The Duke because he desired, if possible, to avoid what, two minutes later, actually happened. A terse and amiable colloquy between Jackson on the one part and Teacup and Ratty on the other had just been concluded. In this, Ratty had just finished saying "It's a go. You's on. No, I don't have to ask 'em permission. As foreman, I'm in charge o' hirin' riders." And Jackson had just surrendered his horse to The Duke and given Bill a doglike look of gratitude, when pandemonium broke loose at the ranch house's entrance.

The din consisted of shouts mingled with the reports from rifles. Bill, perched in emulation of cowboys sideways in his saddle, promptly landed on his back amid a pile of tumble weeds. These weeds had, after drying into weightless balls of net, snapped from their roots; and, while capering with the winds, moved gayly in instalments across the prairie, and found tangled lodgment among the stanchions of the hitching-bar that rose in front of the bunk house. The Duke, who had continued to sit astride, was spared the ignominy of "sunning his moccasins," but he nevertheless was uncomfortably jolted by the leap which his horse made as a protest to the noise.

The shouts continued and presently took definite form. "It is his stylish self, I told you so," "Recognized your voice, Old Chappie, as soon as you warbled," "Come over here where you belong," and "Georgie, we're really charmed to see you," were utterances which The Duke wished might have been unheard at the bunk house.

There was no escape for The Duke. Over to the ranch

house he rode; and, for ten minutes, not only listened to prattle but also wiped his brow at thought of the comments that doubtless were being made at the door of the bunk house. At the end of the ten minutes, The Duke courteously disengaged himself from his two bedizened hosts; brusquely called "Come on, Bill, time to go;" and, with a curt nod at the punchers in front of the bunk house, he started on his way back to the herd.

At The Duke's affront to the cowboys, Bill, with troubled face and honest indignation, blurted to them: "Gee! I'm sorry. I apologize for him." Instantly Teacup, giving Bill a reassuring slap on the back, replied: "No blame to you. His present trouble is his friends has made him sick to his stomach, an' he don't savvy how to handle it." Thereat Bill, rebounding to light-heartedness, gave a vigorous handshake to every one at the bunk house, including even the valet; mounted his horse; bowed formally to the tenderfoots at the ranch house; called "So long" at the top of his lungs, and loped in pursuit of The Duke.

When Bill overtook him, The Duke was so much in the dumps as wholly to ignore the enthusiastic question: "Gee! don't you suppose the fellows at school 'll be jealous when I let out that I know a horse thief?" Soon The Duke, in a depressed tone of voice and with veiled and searching glances toward Bill, suggested: "Brother—" At the word "brother" Bill sat up. He scented profit, inasmuch as he never had been thus addressed except at the beginning of negotiations to bribe him. Present visions of a dollar held him to silence. Even The Duke's continuing "Could you use ten dollars?" provoked no remark. Bill, on the one hand, was overwhelmed by the

largeness of the suggested sum—no previous sale of his soul had netted more than a fifth of this amount—and, on the other hand, he was too prudent to risk breaking The Duke's train of thought. Bill merely gave an assenting nod, though he gave it vigorously.

The price having been fixed, The Duke went on: "Those fellows we just left— Wait a second; you're to get ten dollars for not repeating to anybody at camp what I tell you now about those fellows, you understand that?" Another affirmative nod from Bill, and The Duke again spoke. "Those chaps were in '82 at college, two years ahead of my class. They're both in my society; in fact, helped to initiate me. They're each of them mighty nice in their surroundings back home, but somehow they're misfits in this country.

"When they appeared in camp night before last I rolled into the shadow, out of their sight. Yesterday they weren't at the ranch. I understood they wouldn't be there today, and that's why I was willing to come. No man in our outfit, not even Cookey, knows I have any connection with them. That's why I am paying you the ten dollars so they won't find out."

Bill, looking The Duke squarely in the eye, said: "Don't forget. You've promised me ten. I won't say a word, but all o' our outfit knows it already. How'd I learn that? Why, jus' now from Ratty an' Teacup.

"Thinking 'twas my duty to protect you so long as you stay in the West, I offered Ratty an' Teacup two bits apiece out of my next month's allowance if they wouldn't tell on you. They said 'twasn't honest for 'em to take it; an' they refused it, 'cause, they said, Teacup, before his visitin' our camp, had often heard your tenderfoot

friends talkin' about your bein' somewhere out here and sayin' they hoped to run across you. Teacup says that, yesterday mornin' at our camp, he told our boys all about it; and that they agreed to keep mum in front of us, so as not to hurt our feelin's. But Teacup says they've, 'cause Cookey's from the same college, fair razzed him into locoed buffalodom.

"I don't know 'xactly what those last words mean. I'm goin' to ask Jinglebob. I'm gettin' from him an awful lot o' information that'll be mighty useful at school.

"Don't you think those cowboys were honest not to take my money? When am I goin' to get the ten dollars?

"Duke, it must be discouragin' to your friends to be nothin' but tenderfoots; but I suppose that's all we were, at first."

The two brothers overtook the Tumbling K outfit shortly after it had halted for its "nooning."

The Duke was agreeably surprised to find that, except for an inquiring glance from Cookey, no heed was seemingly paid to his own return. He noticed, however, that Cookey was somewhat red in the face, and was keeping upon the coals a jealously guarded frying pan filled with sizzling fat. As The Duke approached the fire, Cookey muttered to him: "Keep away from that pan. I may need it to throw."

Bill, ignoring all thought of eating, clambered into the wagon; and, after heaving out most of its contents, succeeded in finding his war sack. It held what he was seeking.

Having thus obtained his cherished diary, he seated himself upon the ground and dabbed alternately with

pencil and eraser at one of the blank pages. Jinglebob, summoned by the petulance of the artist's face, presently went to Bill's assistance, and, having inspected the result of the pencil's and eraser's efforts, inquired in good faith: "Is you tryin' to draw anythin' in particular?" On Bill's saying "Yes; need an exact picture o' Jackson, to show the boys at home," Jinglebob, with naught save entire honesty of intention, took over the task of portraiture. Unacquainted, as he was, with draughtsmanship, he instinctively sought, for his starting point, an element with which he might feel confidently familiar; and, having selected it, proceeded to sketch, in full size and complete detail, the spurs which Jackson wore. Because of absorption in Jinglebob's artistry, neither he nor Bill realized, until after the completion of the spur's portrayal, that the limited area of the page would not permit the picture to extend above the middle of Jackson's boots. Just then Tex gave an order for the herd to resume its march.

It was because of this that what is probably the only existing portrait of Jackson does not show him at all.

CHAPTER X

THE TRAIL HERDERS MEET WITH ADVENTURE

JINGLEBOB's prediction as to what he termed the crowded condition of the country into which the outfit of Tumbling K was entering proved true.

That very afternoon no less than four men were encountered, three of whom were taken into camp as overnight guests. And, the very next morning, the herd passed close to a ranch house where five people were. But after that, for ninety miles, nobody was seen.

Of the four men, the first to appear was a crotchety old person who, despite his bent shoulders and stiffened joints, was, with a skinny saddle horse and a skinnier pack mule, confidently moving from the Black Hills to the distant section of the Pend d'Oreille. Being confessedly "out o' luck," he was not averse to accepting an invitation to "throw in with us an' swallow a bean."

The Duke, scenting literary material that promised to impress the editors of the magazine at college, attempted assiduous court to the patriarch. When almost discouraged by the gaffer's crabbedness, he was cheered by Evans's whispered comment: "Only trouble with the lambkin is he's had to eat his own cookin'." And so The Duke redoubled his attentions. Unfortunately he asked: "Where do you expect to mine?" From that moment the veteran was almost as dumb as the proverbial oyster. Save for an occasional "You bet" or "No can do" uttered in lugubrious voice, he made no statement until, when de-

parting the next morning, he dismally announced: "Hope to see you boys in the diggin's somewheres, if I live to get there."

Almost on the heels of the prospector appeared a mounted cowboy who was engaged in the task of leading a horse that, at the end of a tow line, intermittently gyrated in much the same manner as does a kite at the end of its string. But this cowboy, because acquainted with not only the vagaries of trail cattle but also the temper of trailing punchers as well, had prudently sheered, with his unruly companion, far to one side.

Jinglebob left the herd and made a momentary call upon the puncher. Quickly returning, he announced: "It's Joe Martin from Miles. Won't eat off us, 'cause he's tryin' to make the Jug tonight. The skate he's leadin' is the one that Ol' Man Thompson's sendin' down. Martin says as how, for downright rottenness, the hoss is plum' lovely. Looks to me meaner 'an a centipede with chilblains."

As Tumbling K's outfit was going into camp in the early evening the last two men arrived: college professors belonging to the staff of a geological expedition which was at work in the locality. Having at a late hour chanced upon something of scientific interest, they had decided to renounce supper, blankets, and breakfast in order to remain on the scene, but presently they spied Tumbling K's hospitable camp.

It greatly surprised The Duke to see how these two visitors were treated as soon as they had disclosed their identity. The punchers, Plummer in particular, were much more deferential than The Duke would have thought it incumbent on himself to be.

It was of still greater wonderment to The Duke when the two visitors, by the form of their numerous questions, seemed to be giving serious credit to statements contained in the punchers' answers, especially in the answers of Plummer. It presently developed that, as regards the quantity of the preceding year's erosion in certain fossil beds, these scholars were obtaining data so reliable as to determine the route their expedition would follow through the remainder of the season. Buckaroos' power of intensive and accurate observation has often been of material aid to scientists.

The modesty of such of Tumbling K's men as took part in the conversation was also surprising to The Duke. But the point of amazement was reached when one of the professors, turning to him, casually said for his ear alone: "Mr. Owens here tells me that you are to study advanced geology this coming academic year. If you will pardon the suggestion, you well might, while you have the opportunity, keep in close touch with your Charlie Plummer. He has been packer on three expeditions made by my associates; and is a most competent geological observer, they tell me. He can be of great assistance to you."

When, late that evening, The Duke imparted to Bill what the older brother deemed to be astonishing news, he produced no effect beyond the rejoinder: "Bet you Jinglebob knows more. He knows everythin'. Jus' been teachin' me how to tie a lynchin' knot, so's I can show the boys at school."

Some hours before these conversations, or in other words when the outfit was making camp, Tex had said to Jinglebob: "Looks like a little fresh meat might be appre-

ciated. Sleepy Joe 'll help you." Jinglebob, in his turn, had called: "Hulloa! Joe, we's got to rustle fresh beef, Is any animal with our hunger brand near you?"

Bill overheard this; and, always greedy for information about the cattle range, asked: "What does a hunger brand look like? I haven't seen one yet." Jinglebob's answer was promptly forthcoming: "Large pink an' blue letters on animal's nigh side, readin' 'Eat me' in a frame o' paper lace." To this, Jinglebob added: "Mos' breaks my heart to admit it, but you an' me can't devour your Diamon' Five cow afore we finds time to notch our teeth. She's made o' machinery beltin'. Reckon the effete East's got to do the chawin' on 'er."

Cookey was now appealed to. He was Bill's ultimate refuge whenever the cowboys were either uncommunicative or else irrevocably set on waggery. Thus Bill learned from Cookey that, although no such thing as a hunger brand actually existed, the term, a bit of slang, was in common use. It meant, so Cookey truthfully stated, that the particular animal said to carry it had been selected in order to provide food.

The men shepherding a trail herd were apt to restrict their hunger brand to strays that had wandered into the herd. Putting it on any beast of their own would, to that extent, tend to impair their reputation for ability to deliver at the herd's destination the maximum possible number of the cattle entrusted to them.

Jinglebob and Sleepy Joe, having cut out a young steer from the herd and escorted the brute to a point so far away that neither sound nor scent from butchering would reach its fellow cattle, steaks presently were in the frying pans, while ribs in undivided racks walled the fire on

either side. Glee permeated the response to Cookey's ultimate "Come an' get it," and soon all the members of the camp were wolfing meat.

In the morning there occurred an accident which, though slight, threatened for a moment to be serious. It happened to The Duke and was caused by Bill. Though The Duke long since had surrendered the reata which towed Jackson's horse during the return journey from the Jug Ranch, Bill had tenaciously clung to the lariat that had collusively been placed in his custody when Jackson's trail had earlier been traced by Jinglebob and Kansas Ed. Bill, as soon as he acquired this rope, had proceeded to make a pest of himself. His aimings from the saddle at sage-brush had done no more than to annoy Woof, his throws from foot at sticks driven for the purpose into the ground had accomplished no more than to knock the hats from several people and twice to upset the coffee pot; but, when he essayed the bolder quarry of a horse in the remuda and thereby started a runaway, his roping was suppressed. Nevertheless, because of his importunity, he was allowed to retain the reata as a saddle ornament on condition that he would keep it dormant.

He had previously been too impatient to allow himself to begin, as he should have done, with the rudiments of throwing. These rudiments involved a multiplicity of muscular motions that were requisite to open the noose and keep it open, and to fling it with accuracy and due velocity at the proper instant. It was an affair of rhythm as well as of suppleness of thews. Incidentally, in the throw's usual form (forward), the thrower, after the noose had been fully opened and set to rapid swinging, pursued a method similar to that employed by a baseball



At the slap, Bill's steed bolted—

infielder when whipping an overhand line-throw to a baseman. That a man was a competent caster denoted usually that hour after hour, day after day, month after month had patiently been spent in practice.

Despite all that the punchers had said to Bill, he could not hold permanently in mind that a reata was stored with latent danger. Consequently he was oftentimes careless in his stowage of the rope he sported.

Directly after breakfast, standing beside his horse, he attempted an adjustment of his saddle; and, when doing so, allowed a portion of his lariat to escape from its coil and to hang from its strap beside the saddle horn. The portion that was thus loose was the "business end."

The Duke, heading for his own steed, gave Bill, in passing him, a resounding slap; and that instant stepped into the center of the noose. At the slap, Bill's steed bolted; and, if it had not been that Jinglebob was mounted, had his own rope in hand and was able with lightninglike speed to accomplish that acme of reata casting, a back throw on the off side, The Duke might not have lived to fine Bill ten dollars for his improvidence. The Duke was dragged but twenty feet and the ground was soft. So no damage was done save to Bill's exchequer.

It is but fair to the memory of Woof to assert that he was not the guilty bronco. His understudy was now serving Bill, in order that he himself might enjoy a short vacation in the remuda. And Woof *was* enjoying the vacation; for thus far, though he had nipped two horses and kicked three, Pete the wrangler had never detected any act that was not commensurate with the little devil's pharasaical appearance of innocence and suavity.

Woof's understudy had no name, since he was not a notable animal. With old-time ranchmen, only such beasts as possessed outstanding qualities of excellence or infamy were accorded the distinction of individual cognomens. For a horse to earn the right to be specially designated as "Scoot," "Woof," "Flash," "Ginger," "Bingo," "I'm Here," or whatever of this sort, he needs must be proficient in the games of whittling or of roping. On the other hand, by owning both a satanic brain and a convulsive spine, he might hope to be known as, for example, "Sciatica," "Asphyxia," "Agony," "Sudden Death," "Mortuary," or "Funeral Parlor." Woof's understudy, Bill's present nag, was merely "that cock-eyed strawberry roan."

The remuda was thoroughly masculine in its membership. Mares, because of instability of character during conditions of danger or excitement, were rarely under the saddle of a cowboy who was engaged in roping or in any strenuous work about a herd.

Though a horse's name commonly gave some inkling of the beast's nature and though the phrase "Old Man" marked a ranch owner regardless of his age, cowboys' nicknames, on the other hand, were in most instances wholly uninformative. They ordinarily were imposed upon a person by his associates, and their wording was usually suggested by some event occurring at the outset of his employment by an outfit. Because of this method of bestowal, a puncher's by-name was prone to change when he wandered from one section of the country to another far away.

Tumbling K's route passing in mid-morning near a ranch, Tex, Jinglebob, and the King brothers rode over to

it in order to report. Five men appeared when Tex gave his hail.

Again Bill made a blunder; for, seeing a cow's hide drying on the corral rails, he began to call attention to the brands upon the hide. Happily none of the local people noticed that he was doing it, and Tex squelched him before he could continue long in his offence. Open mention of the decorations on animal hides belonging to other people was not mannerly. It was thought to imply a query as to whether or not the displayers of the skins had been honest in acquiring them. Irascible men among that nefarious fraternity which subsisted largely on the products of "hungry loops" at the ends of their lariats were quite apt, as Tex remarked, to be "a bit shooty" when the subject of brands was broached untactfully.

The Duke, who ever had an eye open for the study of social usages, was not surprised, because of his remembrance of the Texans' action, to see that Jinglebob and Tex, when invited to enter the ranch house, promptly ridded themselves of their six-guns. He was however somewhat puzzled when he realized that nobody removed his hat when indoors; and this, even though all the men seated themselves at table for a courteously offered meal. The Duke, after returning to the herd, broached this bewildering topic to Owens; but Charlie Plummer, overhearing The Duke's question, definitively answered it: "We cattlemen's got our customs same as your people back in the states. When your home folks is at a banquet, do all the men take off their pants? They's no difference 'twixt hats an' pants 'cept shape. Mebbe one reason for shuck-in' the guns is to prevent inaccurate shootin' gents from mixin' human brains with the table butter."

Another occurrence at this ranch astonished The Duke. The owner, handing a watch, a pair of spurs, and forty dollars in gold to Tex, said in a matter-of-fact way: "Suppose you wouldn't mind layin' these on a survey monument that you'll find 'longside o' the trail thirty miles above here. Monument's a pile o' rocks four feet high with a benchmark on an outcrop at its base. The plunder belongs to Squinty, our foreman, who's out huntin' strays. A passin' stranger brought word that Squinty, meetin' him up country, wanted to have the stuff sent up to him, so's he could find it at the monument on Tuesday. Your takin' it 'll save our makin' a trip."

The Duke's business prudence was shocked at this loose treatment of valuable property, and the shock was not lessened when later Tex, in answer to a question, asserted: "No. Nobody at that ranch hadn't never seen any o' our outfit afore. But we was wearin' chaps an' was with a trail herd, and that's good 'nough identification for anybody out in this country."

The next day, The Duke's qualms were renewed when he saw Squinty's assets placed upon a rock in open sight and offered no protection except such as might serve against inclement weather—an inverted box with a weight atop it. The Duke's expostulation provoked from Ter-til the statement: "Though mavericks an' sometimes estrays is subject to pesterin', all other property in the cattle country, 'cept sheep, is sacred. Squinty's plunder could safe stay there a million years, 'less Injuns is let out on huntin' passes from the reservation. Some Injuns ain't yet through gettin' hunk with white men for the white men's robbin' o' Injun graves an' caches."

To this, Kansas Ed added: "The only locks in the

whole cattle range is what the Easterners brought out so's to protect 'emselves agin' each other. Calls it the effete East, does they! While it's effeter nor it is intelligent, it's crookeder 'an either o' 'em. Zed Judson down to the Muleshoe Ranch tells me as how him, not bein' a-tall prejudiced agin' the East, knows for a fact that, when a death occurs in New York, they bury the body quick so's to try an' prevent the intimate friends from stealin' the handles off o' the coffin."

The five days succeeding the one on which Squinty's property was deposited at the monument were uneventful. The one group of buildings seen was at the moment empty of occupants, the cattle except for one mild outburst behaved themselves, and a torrential rain happily elected to fall in the daytime.

On the sixth day, when but little over one more week of marching remained, three visitors arrived.

Two of them, a squaw man and his patient ill-used consort, crossed the trail during the nooning halt and stopped for whatever luncheon they might beg. All that Bill could remember about this squaw man in after years was that he seemed to be, not only prodigiously lazy, but also, as Evans expressed it, "considerable whiffy on the lee side."

Shortly before the initial squad of the nightherd was to go on duty, a lone cowboy hailed. Dismounting from a horse that was staggering from exhaustion, he snapped out despite a tired voice: "I'm Sam Jones o' the 'X W.' You got a Jinglebob in your outfit? Bad news for him."

Jinglebob, who was picketing his night horse and so out of earshot, was summoned by a shrill call and promptly came into camp. Jones stepped up to him; and, with

sympathy showing in both face and intonation, said quietly: "I'm Sam Jones o' the 'X W,' ridin' relay with a message to you. Your brother Henry's killed at his ranch three days ago."

The twinship in Jinglebob instantly responded. He gave a great sob, as though his soul had emptied itself; and then, making not a single sound, not even so much as that of breathing, he leaned toward the messenger to glean the remainder of the tidings. Jones continued: "In ropin' fast, heavy steer, his hoss hit a slick spot at the 'bust,' an' buried the saddle horn in Henry's skull back o' the right ear. No sufferin', instantaneous. Buried under the big cottonwood, two miles east o' ranch house."

Jinglebob mumbled "Thanks," gave Jones a grateful handshake; and then, under the exacting intuition of a cattleman, glanced toward the fire, to discover whether or not food and coffee were available for the newcomer. Seeing that Owens had energetically started cooking on Jones's behalf, Jinglebob allowed his eyes to flit from man to man in the circle that silently surrounded him. And, as he glimpsed each man, he accorded him a jerky but solemn nod in appreciation of the man's sigh of condolence.

Having made in this way a round of all the outfit, Jinglebob, though not scheduled to begin his herding duty till three thirty in the morning, walked to his night horse; and, as he started toward the beast, he called over his shoulder in expressionless voice: "Tex, I'm goin' to ride this shift. So lay off one man from it." Accordingly, only Shorty Brown and Buster followed him to the cattle's bed ground.

Jones, in a wistful tone, remarked apologetically to The

Duke—apologetically, and without an atom of braggadocio—"Sorry to a-been so late in arrivin'; but the last seventy miles was slowed by one hoss dyin' under me, another one peterin' out, an' my resaddlin' bein' hampered by a cracked rib handed me by a cheerful bronc last week." And then Jones turned to Cookey and appreciatively remarked: "Don't spavin yoursel' on my account, but I sure likes barrels o' coffee." To nobody in particular, he added: "Reckon I'd best unsaddle." But he was relieved from this task by one of the four men who, in recognition of Jones's feat, had stationed themselves near his toil-worn steed, and were waiting for his permission to touch the animal.

Presently there floated back from the herd's locality the sound of singing to the cattle. The music was made by but one voice. And, instead of the usual succession of fragments, it clung persistently to a single air and wording: a plaintive "spiritual" familiar at old-time Southern camp-meetings. At the end of the concluding line of every stanza, and thus at the close of each reiteration of "In the holiness of the Lord," there came in the singer's voice a catch that was in musical key with the wail of the breeze.

After three minutes of this, Bill appealed to Pete: "Please help me saddle Woof. I want to join Jinglebob." Tex, who overheard, gave Pete a signal of assent; and soon Bill was patrolling in the darkness. Bill had the grace not to disclose his presence. He merely fell into line a hundred feet behind Jinglebob's horse and began his weary circling. Jinglebob showed no notice of the new companionship, even when he reversed his course as a nightherder commonly did in order to pass his fel-

low sentries and be assured by them that all things were in order.

At half after ten and again at one o'clock, the men from the incoming shifts had roused only two substitutes to take their places, for Jinglebob was still on guard service; and, all the while, his hymn intermittently pierced the stillness.

Half after three o'clock being the scheduled time for Jinglebob's commencement of his normal tour of duty, he thereafter was able, as of right, to maintain his vigil. Throughout the night, the one cessation from his circling, one of the few pauses in his mournful lilting, was when, at about two o'clock, he escorted Bill into camp; left him there; and, after obtaining a remount from amid the grazing cavvy, returned to his sentry line.

When thus suddenly appearing with Bill in camp, Jinglebob uttered no word to anybody. He came, riding closely side by side with a youth who, sound asleep, had slumped so far into the saddle as scarcely to look like a human being. Having gently dragged Bill from Woof's back, he laid him on an empty bed roll, covered him with a blanket, removed Woof's saddle and bridle, and headed for the remuda. Jinglebob had been silent even though a man was actively replenishing the fire, which this man did because Tumbling K had earlier determined that for the sake of Jinglebob the coffee pot should boil all night.

At six o'clock, the herd was once more on the march. Jinglebob, in response to Tex's offer of an immediate vacation such as would allow a visit to the grave, had said: "Thanks; but 'tain't no use, he's buried. Thanks!" and accordingly he was now in his habitual post of rider at the herd's left point. His attempts to address the cattle

with "Yip! Yip!" were, however, throaty and inept. Bill, "ridin' the wagon," was dozing beside Cookey on the driver's seat.

Sam Jones had already started homeward. He had been loaned a fresh horse, which was to be returned when opportunity offered. Mounted on this new beast and leading his own jaded nag, he was ambling southward. And he was blithely whistling. Why not? Had he not been given a panful of biscuits, a slab of bacon, a three days' supply of coffee, an empty tomato can for culinary usage, and a gunny sack in which to store them? The Duke's offer of a blanket had been declined. "Won't be out more 'an two nights at most. Weather's warm. 'Twould be stealin' to take it off you." And so Sam Jones, with a hundred and eighty miles of riding done, a hundred and eighty miles to do, was cheerfully whistling above his cracked rib.

After the whistler had departed, The Duke, by innocently asking Tex "How much is Jones paid for his trip?" obtained a reply given with a vehemence that dumfounded the questioner: "Paid? What in hell are you talkin' 'bout? Paid? Hell! no. His pay is in his conscience. If you was to talk money to Jones right now 'bout his ride, he might kill you. Leastwise he'd slap your face." Even yet could be faintly heard the distant whistling of a man with a cracked rib.

The remuda having been decreased to the extent of the horse loaned to Sam Jones was now, through The Duke's ineptitude, to lose a second animal. Both of The Duke's regular horses, Stomachache and Despair, were on the hospital list; put there by sore backs induced through their rider's clumsy twisting in the saddle. Wherefore,

The Duke was now committed to a pony that did not know him.

In quest of wild flowers, The Duke, having ridden far from the herd, dismounted and went on foot to a plant that grew but a few steps from his halting spot. When leaving his steed, he neglected to throw the reins over its head and to the ground. Had he done so, the beast, being of Western training, would patiently have waited through an indefinite number of hours. As things were, it strolled away. As soon as the pilgrim—and The Duke was still a pilgrim—discovered the defection, he started in pursuit.

The little horse was too friendly to run far, yet too mischievous to be wholly well behaved. It would pretend to graze; and, the moment the tenderfoot came within an arm's length of the bridle, the four-legged imp would dodge, trot for fifty or a hundred feet, and again feign to nibble grass.

Presently The Duke became disheartened. He realized that he was at least ten miles from the herd. He sat down, partly to rest, partly to think. "Uncle" John Yancey once said: "The greatest failures are the thoughts of pilgrims," and again: "Tenderfoots that don't think get in trouble, those that do think get in worse." Nevertheless, this particular tenderfoot sat himself down to think.

Out through the haze of his discouragements burst an idea. He recalled that, a mile or so back upon his course, he had seen an Indian standing beside a water hole. Perhaps the Indian might help. So young hopeful backtracked to the water hole, and there still was the Indian. The redskin promptly evidenced an apparent inability to understand a particle of English. The tenderfoot knew no Indian words, and kenned nothing of the sign lan-

guage; so he took refuge in violent pantomime, a pantomime that seemingly conveyed no clear picture.

Whatever may have been the redskin's first impressions, his interest was sufficiently awakened by the exhibition of a silver dollar to lead him to enter on an expedition of inquiry. So the Indian and the white youth started toward the distant horse. They had traveled but a little way before the wily savage discovered the grazing animal and instantly he sensed the entire situation.

Promptly he pointed to the horse. The Duke nodded in affirmation. Immediately the Indian made a gesture toward The Duke's pocket, and sat down. The pilgrim again produced the silver dollar. The Indian pointed first at it, then toward the horse; shook his head to show negation; raised ten fingers; once more directed his finger toward the horse, and, coincidently with this last motion, bobbed his head in token of assent.

The pilgrim was nonplussed. He had with him only five dollars, but he felt that time was pressing and he saw no hope save through the tawny man beside him. Accordingly, he laid five silver dollars in a row upon the ground and turned all his pockets inside out. The Indian spent a moment in quiet reflection; and then, stepping to the side of the innocent youth, gently removed the young man's hat, deposited it abreast the file of coins, and pointed toward the horse.

The terms were at once accepted. Thereupon the untutored savage, having picked up the hat and money and firmly stowed them on his person, made sign that the tenderfoot was to remain just where he was while the Indian should be absent in pursuit of the bronco.

The Indian walked directly up to that once exasperat-

ing animal. The beast had tired of naughtiness and now was quietly waiting for its master. Originally an "Indian pony," it cheerfully made no distinction between red and white; and thus, without meeting even a shadow of resistance, the Indian was able to grasp the reins, mount, and ride away. He never came back.

Some four hours afterward, The Duke in his high-heeled boots arrived footsore and shamefaced at the camp. If only he could reach the wagon without having been seen by any of the punchers, it might be perhaps that only Owens would know that The Duke had, as Evans later said, preserved his tenderfootism unsullied to the end. He scouted the camp fire widely and, as he thought for a while successfully, seeing that none of the cowboys whom he encountered made any comment.

The last surviving remnants of The Duke's vanity, however, received a setback when, to his opening of "Hope you haven't been too much worried at my being late," Owens answered: "Why should I?" The Duke, conforming with the universal rule of mankind, had taken to himself a tinge of heroism by virtue of the fact that he had been the central figure in an adventure, even though this adventure had been discreditable. And he was not as yet sufficiently aware of ranching philosophy to comprehend that, in the absence of dangerous weather or other notoriously ill-starred conditions, it was taken for granted that people would not readily get themselves into trouble and, in consequence, that their tardiness had ordinarily no sinister import.

Because Owens proved himself a sympathetic listener to the confession about the missing horse, The Duke's diffidence presently gave place to indignation and resent-

ment; and thus he concluded with "About that Indian, what had I better do?" While surprised at Owens's soberly given reply, The Duke thought highly of it. It ran: "What had you better do? Just one thing. Go into the silences, and try to keep the thing a secret among you, me, the horse, and the Indian. In heaven's name, don't open the subject to any of the punchers. You eat some beans and turn in."

Not until weeks afterward did The Duke hear anyone except Owens, Bill, and Uncle Jim speak of the bronco's loss, and so he fatuously assumed that the cowboys did not know of it. But, when at the end of these weeks afterward The Duke, starting Eastward on the Northern Pacific Railway, was standing on the step of his Pullman car and was saying his last goodbyes to some of his former comrades, Evans handed him a baggage check purloined from the station agent; and, in an offhand casual manner, remarked: "This check's for your hoss. The Injun's been sent you by mail."

CHAPTER XI

BAD HORSES

Two days after Sam Jones had departed from the camp of Tumbling K, it was thought wise to rest both men and animals and to await instruction from Uncle Jim; and so, for seventy-two hours, the herd was halted and allowed to graze.

At the outset of this pause, Tex with Jinglebob and three other of the cowboys escorted The Duke and Bill to a section of the range which lay some miles to one side of the trail and on which a round-up by several outfits was known to be in progress. The purpose of this three-days' excursion was to give the two pilgrims an opportunity of witnessing the operation of a rodeo and incidentally to accord the punchers means of guarding the interest which Uncle Jim had in one of the ranches that was involved in this gathering of live stock.

In these round-ups upon the unfenced open range, mounted cowboys, termed circle riders, hied themselves to the outer edges of the tract that was to be "worked," and there formed in a widely spaced skirmish line, the intervals between the horsemen varying in accordance with the character of the ground. Here, in a rugged section, the gaps might measure but a few hundred yards. There, because of open plain, they might be as long as a half-mile.

While the line was always pushing forward in cres-

centlike form toward a designated holding spot, the riders were intermittently weaving to and fro, hither and yon, in order to thwart attempts by some of the quarry to avoid joining the procession, or, being in it, to escape. Many of these dodging contests were transacted at the extreme of speed, even though they might on occasion lead over badger holes and across rock-strewn ground.

The procession was composed of the quarry and of the mounted cowboys; and the quarry consisted of every hoofed animal that was in the line of march; these animals being, in the main, fast, crafty, and sometimes combative. Few schools more effective than a round-up of long horns existed for the student who wished to learn how to break his bones.

So soon as the converging circle riders had urged their quarry onto the designated holding spot, they surrounded the captured brutes and held them in "close herd" or, in other words, in a compact group.

After a pause sufficient to allow men to change their horses, the concentrated mass of cattle was invaded by cowboys astride of nimble-footed ponies that, by both instinct and training, were specially adapted to "cutting out" beasts from the dense assembly. The pony under any of these riders would quickly detect which brute his rider desired to abduct; and, at that instant, there would begin a game of tag played hither and thither through the herd, past tossing horns and at racing speed. With pony and rider in accord, their prey would gradually be forced from its companions and piloted to wherever the rider wished it to go.

Thus all the cattle—here singly, there in a set of two (a cow and her calf)—were presently divorced from the

main group and driven before the tally man; and then, as indicated by their brands, were distributed among various subsidiary holding spots, one such spot being allotted to each ranch represented. The cattle at each such spot collectively formed what was termed a "cut" or "day herd."

Whatever strays from foreign ranges were encountered were, at the rodeo's conclusion, shooed toward their homes, this neighborly process being styled "throwing over."

Three distant ranches had representatives at this rodeo, in order that the interests of these far off outfits, as regards strayed cattle, might be the better guarded. These representatives or so-called reps were, in accord with custom, grudgingly offered much blandishment; it being hoped that thereby they might become the more forgiving toward whatever bad treatment the estrays from their ranches had received upon the ranges of their hosts.

Until the last animal had been cut out from the herd, the atmosphere was slit by flying lariats, because there were not a few calves to be thrown and branded, and also some adult beasts required rough punishment before they would cease their efforts either to escape or to assault the dismounted punchers who, grouped about the fire, were wielding the branding-irons. In the words of Jinglebob, "A cow with a fresh branded calf may be a mother, but she ain't no lady."

And all the time well-nigh suffocating dust obscured the performers in a chorale formed by the clacks of horns, the snorts of horses, the shouts of men, the "blattin'" of calves, the lows of adult cattle, and the thuds as heavy beasts either collided or were "stretched" or "bedded"; these two terms signifying in cattlemen's language that a

lassoed brute had fallen at full length and with such force as to make it willing to lie flat and undemonstrative.

And all the time the whole region reeked with the odor of burning hair.

Where eventually were The Duke and Bill? Were they wantonly darting about on restive horses. They were not. They were up a tree. On the round-up's opening day, they had as spectators accompanied Jinglebob in the line of circle riders; but even this supposedly easy billet had proved itself to be so strenuous as in time to become irksome. Because of the nature of the surrounding country, there was no need, as would usually be the case, for a daily change in the location of the branding fire and of the men's night camp and for a schedule of four days instead of three. A lone and stout cottonwood grew but a hundred yards or so from the site of the branding fire; and thus, throughout the round-up, this tree offered a convenient grand stand.

As soon as the van of the day's catch of animals was spied approaching, The Duke and Bill would scurry to this tree and climb it. They gradually accumulated arboreal comrades because, not only was one puncher so badly hurt as to be eliminated from roping; but, from time to time, a sweaty cowboy would steal relaxation by temporarily deserting his bronco and perching, for the duration of a cigarette, upon one of the cottonwood's limbs. Thanks to the whimsy of these visitors, Bill, whom they liked at sight, acquired a stock of picturesque misinformation.

Despite Bill's contentment, The Duke each afternoon craved the moment when, as the last animal quitted the main holding spot, the round-up boss, to order an end

of labor, would officially proclaim: "Gents, the herd is worked."

Save on the eve of the rodeo, there was little attempt at jollification; this, for the reason that all the men were tired. But, as soon as the round-up ended, there was a reaction in favor of arrant nonsense in which ranch partisanship was vigorous, although usually good-natured.

In due time, six or eight unbroken broncos retained from the various horses caught by the human net of circle riders were brought forward, and were made the basis for money pools on their ability to resist riders.

The punchers' conception of proper riding in competitions of this sort required that the rider should rely wholly upon his brains, his balancing ability, and his sense of rhythm. Even though he were not thrown, he would be disqualified if, after mounting, either of his hands touched the saddle or the horse, if more than one hand held the reins, if he used his spurs for clinging, or if either of his feet left a stirrup. Among other causes for disqualification were unduly showing daylight between his body and the saddle, as also failure partially to dislodge himself by spurring his steed alternately on hips and shoulders.

Most of the six or eight disreputable broncos could be saddled while still standing on their feet. They were held in a web of straining lariats, men on either side of them pushed against their flanks, gunny sacks as blinders were tied over their eyes, and, in order to divert their minds from immediate frenzy, their heads were pulled to and fro, and an ear of one of them was chewed between an assisting puncher's teeth. It is true that all these measures were taken; but, nevertheless, these horses were allowed to stand upon their feet. One brute, however,

was from the outset so violent that he had to be thrown and held upon the ground before a saddle and headstall could be attached to him. This was the horse which, as the result of drawing lots, Jinglebob obtained as his "rocking chair" in the competition.

The riding of the average unbroken horse was, for a top cowboy, an easily accomplished if somewhat uncomfortable task. But one bronco in approximately each five hundred was a so-called outlaw, a brute that never could be broken and that adopted bucking as its profession. Existent but far less numerous, were such of the "spoiled horses" (animals with dispositions ruined through man's abuse) as had elected to be turbulent instead of merely sullen. It was these outlaws and spoiled horses that tested a puncher's skill.

Among these outlaws and spoiled horses were brutes that, scorning simple rearings, kickings, plunges, and humpings, expressed their rioting in terms of a highly complicated series of movements. These movements, as regards ingenuity, intricacy, speed, timing, energy, and effectiveness, varied with the individual horse. Beasts that were extremely proficient could establish a definite rhythm in their torsions, and thereafter, in the twinkling of an eye, alter the time beat and the trend of the motion. Sudden shifts would be made in the length and direction of jumps. A spine that had been rising and falling might instantly shift to horizontal bendings. Some of the transpositions were made while the horse had at least one foot upon the ground, to steady him; others, in sling-shot fashion, when the horse was wholly in the air.

What the horse attempted was to deliver a series of strokes which would be inconsistent with each other and

thus would be unexpected. Once the horse felt his rider lose balance or fall out of rhythm, all his energy would go into one great thrust, aimed in the direction toward which the rider had already slipped. And all the while the horse seemingly apprehended the varying state of his rider's balance.

What the rider attempted was to foresee the horse's next motion, and so to adjust his own body as to counteract its effect. Wherefore the rider, if still a horse, was ever shifting himself in order to preserve his equilibrium and to keep in time with the whirling beast beneath him.

The rider not only did not cling but oftentimes would intentionally throw his body somewhat out of the saddle in the expectation that the horse would leap in that same direction. No man had strength enough to remain in the saddle by means of mere clinging. He stayed there because he kept in time with the horse's dance.

All the contests that were scheduled to precede Jinglebob's display of horsemanship had been completed. Four tumbles, a bloody nose, two strained ligaments, and much interchange of small amounts of money formed the catalogue of results.

Jinglebob, the best rider in that part of the cattle country, thereupon stepped to the side of the prone brawler that was waiting for an opportunity to arise and riot. At Jinglebob's quietly spoken command of "Shoot," the blinder was pulled from the horse's eyes and the holding reatas were released. As the angry creature scrambled to his feet, Jinglebob glided into the saddle; and, for some forty seconds thereafter, there was a brilliant exhibition of human skill and equine deviltry.

For five jumps the outlaw merely "pitched a plung-



Jinglebob—the best rider in that part of the country.

in' " or, in other words, bucked "straight away" or directly forward; all this being probably intended to feel out his man. True, the brute "veed" his leaps by means of sharp leanings alternately to right and left; true, he bulged his spine, lunged his shoulders and stiffened his knees; but thus far he had not "opened his box of tricks."

Suddenly the animal bounded into a "sun-fishing," which is to say, twisted his body into a crescent with its horns swinging shuttlewise to right and left, and next he began to "fence-corner," or, in other words, to leave the ground while headed at one point and to land while headed at another. At every successive leap, this "fence-cornerin'" became more exaggerated in its differences between the points of leaving and return; so much so that presently the beast, by accomplishing a horizontal half-turn in the air, was "swappin' ends," otherwise known as "end for endin'."

Meanwhile Jinglebob had with his free hand been preparing to roll a cigarette. All this time the rider, by sensing the gathering of the horse's muscles, had been accurately prejudging the direction in which the animal would jump next.

Thus far the bronco had been bucking with uniformity of time beat, but now he was to alter his method. Between some of his leaps he had made a half-second's pause for taking breath. Now he halted a full two seconds, packed his lungs with air and prepared, as cowboys said, to "play his big casino."

A long, forward, sun-fishing bound was followed immediately by a lazy end for end; this by a more rapid whirl; and thereupon the brute, having made a lightning-like lunge straight backward, instantly and with a cork-

screwing twist leaped forward and upward; and so, having turned upon his side while in the air, fell flat upon the earth. It was a neatly designed and well executed "side-throw;" but it failed in its murderous purpose, because Jinglebob had flung himself clear while the horse was as yet off the ground.

The beast landed with a thud. When his breath returned and he clambered to his feet Jinglebob had already vaulted into the saddle. The horse, dropping his ears and sagging his head, stood sweating, panting, but submissive. His failure had broken his spirit. Jinglebob had, in punchers' wording, "ridden it out" or "ridden to a finish." The bronco, in all probability, never again would buck so viciously.

The surrender by the bronco induced one immediate effect. It ended Bill's monologue of "Gee!" which had been enthusiastically reiterated at every move the horse had made.

Jinglebob, having collected his prize money of forty dollars—no small sum for him, since it equalled a month's wages—turned to the injured puncher who had roosted in the tree with The Duke and Bill and who wistfully had been gazing at the riding of the buckers. Making no suggestion that this man, Goff by name, would doubtless need money to pay a doctor, Jinglebob handed him half of the winnings; and eased the acceptance of it by saying heartily: "Half's yourn. If 'twasn't for your bein' hurt, you'd a-topped off a bronc in style an' tied me."

Goff's gratitude took form in the ungrudging admission: "A straight-up ride. He sure was a buckner right." This praise, expressed with the misplacement that often marked the position of cowboys' adjectives, was pleasing

to the ears of Jinglebob, because Goff was the only buckaroo in the region who could approach to rivalry with Jinglebob in horsemanship.

Shortly before Jinglebob's ride commenced, the men of the Bar Eight Ranch, an outfit notorious for its sporting proclivities, had made veiled references to an "onery walkin' beam" which they were holding in reserve; and which, as they affirmed, had bucked the whiskers off of no less than fourteen victims. Immediately after the conclusion of the ride, two of these Bar Eight men flitted to a nearby corral; and from it produced a cayuse which, by reason of its contour and behavior, seemed to have, as Kansas Ed suggested, "no good points 'cept complete cussedness an' general wuthlessness."

As the two men appeared with their ill-mannered captive sandwiched between their horses and gripped about his neck by two lariats, the Bar Eight people began emphatically to offer bets that "Ain't nobody here can glue to that geezer for more'n five jumps. Our fifty dollars is sayin' so." On finding that none of their hearers were disposed to cover the wager, the Bar Eight folk became more and more noisily importunate. Finally one of the audience, a cowboy belonging to the Fiddle-back Ranch, was goaded into activity. After a whispered conference with various other punchers and a rife digging into pockets, he announced: "Bet's taken, if Jinglebob 'll hairpin. You's got to give us time to find him." At this, the Fiddle-back cowboy and two or three associates started upon a quest for the one rider who supposedly could douse Bar Eight's conceit.

It took but a few minutes to discover his whereabouts. Jinglebob and all the rest of Tumbling K's people, save

Sleepy Joe, The Duke, and Bill, were busied about the edges of a milling cut that belonged to the invalid puncher's outfit. The cattle in this cut had gotten beyond control by their original herders; and thus men from Tumbling K and from one other outfit were lending assistance.

The ambassadors from the syndicate of wagers had barely begun their overtures to Jinglebob when from out of the neighboring brush rode Jackson. His advent caused some delay in the starting of the ride and occasioned a change in the identity of the rider. As matters turned out, Jackson, and not Jinglebob, mounted Bar Eight's "delirious palfrey."

There was some delay because Tumbling K felt called upon to exercise its right of learning why Jackson had followed its herd, a disquieting act after what had already happened on the trail drive. Jackson's story, however, was credible and satisfactory. He began by admitting that he had lied when he said at the trail camp that he was a Texan bound southward from Montana, and then he continued in this wise.

Prior to his rescue by Tumbling K, he had been staying at Cheyenne; and there he had fallen in with Hank on the very day that this derelict arrived from Colorado and the scene of the setting down. Hank, being possessed of three horses—one of them, the now defunct Gimcrack; the other two of them borrowed under cover of falsehood from an overtrusting rancher—and being possessed also of money that would purchase food, was irresistible to the then penniless Jackson when Hank intimated that there was immediate need for a top rider in "a job that'd be quick, secret, safe, an' payin'."

The employment was greedily accepted, even though

its theatre was not disclosed; and was retained, despite the fact that Hank's carriage of a rifle clouded the allegation as to safety. Jackson knew no more than that he himself was to assist in the breaking and moving of numerous horses that were ranging somewhere in eastern Wyoming. Not until well launched upon the trail did he learn that these animals were the loot of Bud, and that Hank, having for some months flirted with that thief, had now joined forces with him.

Presently the conspirators were overtaken by Bud himself. He brought word that the ranch that held the horses was occupied by its new owners, and that the two cow-punchers who were with these owners could not be relied upon for any cooperation. Thereupon Bud announced that he would "scout the country" preparatory to a raid that night; and ordered that, during his absence, Hank and Jackson should move forward a few miles and then go into hiding.

From the moment of Bud's departure, Hank grew more and more fearful of results, talked much of posses and punishments, halted twice for a conference; and, suddenly going into an ecstasy of terror, he called excitedly "You's spyin' on me for Pieface" and began drawing his rifle from its scabbard. This section of Jackson's narrative, after describing the shooting, concluded with "An' the nex' time I tries hoss stealin', it'll be with a gentleman."

Jackson attributed his own secretiveness when with Tumbling K on the trail in part to his wish not to be thwarted in whatever vengeance he might decide to wreak on Hank; and in other part to the fact that, until he learned from Tumbling K's men at their camp about the

Jug Ranch and conditions there, he did not know where the horses were.

The remainder of Jackson's tale, though short, was interesting to its hearers. Two days after his compact with Ratty and Teacup a posse appeared at the Jug Ranch. At the time of its appearance, Teacup was forcing into a corral the last of the slick ears that subsequently were to have started for Dakota. Jackson's despondency at having the posse ride away with all of these animals was in no way ameliorated by Ratty's stating that he had long ago promised his mother he never would be hung on a Monday or by Teacup's remark that he always had been proud of his Adam's apple.

The one note of cheerfulness in Jackson's voice was when he repeated verbatim a message sent by Teacup to Tex. It was: "I'm goin' to get to be a missionary so's to learn how human flesh is et; an' then I'm goin' to hunt down these two present bosses o' mine, devour 'em, an' later haunt 'em after death."

Jackson, while reciting his history, overheard all that the Fiddle-back cowboy and the confrères in his embassy said to Jinglebob. And so, at the conclusion of Jackson's memoir, he, after tersely answering a few questions that had been put to him, turned to Jinglebob; and, in an appealing voice, declared: "'Less you's dead set to fork, let me take a whirl. I needs the money, for I'm broke. Ain't got no cash to bet, but I'll stick up my saddle. With its gold conchas, it's worth all o' the fifty dollars them Bar Eight boys is namin'."

An eager pause, and then: "Did I come here specially for bet ridin'? No. A trail outfit eased me from the Jug Ranch to up thisa way, an' loaned me a bronc to

make your camp. Your Shorty's takin' that hoss back to 'em, an' is lent me one o' yourn to follow you to here. He said as how mebbe you could place me. I'm ravenin' for a job."

After a momentary conference among Tex, Evans, and Jinglebob, Evans announced: "As Tex is a'ready told you, we can't give you no permanent job; 'cause all you does is flashin' hosses, an' our outfit's cows. But we'll cook up somethin' temporary for you at the ranch, so's you can count on gettin' a little stake.

"So it stands to reason you won't have to tickle this Bar Eight bone breaker onless you wants to. But Jinglebob's willin' to step aside for you if you hungers to make the ride."

Jackson avidly accepted the offer. His pride was up. He might be a horse thief, but he considered himself a man; and his vanity was limitless. His offer to bet his saddle was proof of confidence in his own equestrian skill. Not only was a cowboy's saddle his most prized possession; but also, under the social customs of the cattle country, his losing his saddle, unless by way of voluntary and extraordinary gift, was deemed to be somewhat of a disgrace. A cowboy's saddle bore to him a relationship such as heirloom silver bears to a family that flaunts its pedigree.

Conceit impelled Jackson to a brusque refusal when Jinglebob suggested: "You best take this loaded quirt that I was a-goin' to pack. Them Bar Eight boys is capable o' producin' a nag that'll need to feel it." A loaded quirt was, in form, the typical flexible whip of the punchers; but, that it might be available for use as a weapon against an unduly vicious beast, the handle was heavily

weighted with lead. A blow between the ears of a runaway or rearing horse has, on more than one occasion, saved a cowboy's life. Jinglebob's kindly proffer was met with: "Thanks, don't want it. Nobody can give me points on ridin'."

Jackson, Tumbling K's people, and the other volunteer assistants at Goff's now placid group of cattle proceeded in a body to where Bar Eight's much lauded horse was straining in captivity. Jinglebob felt his own pony throb as he approached the impounded bronco, and he noticed that Bill's Woof not only was refusing to go near the brute but was intermittently quivering. And so Jinglebob, pushing his own steed close to that of Jackson and without speaking, pointed at the prospective buckner, and then at Woof who at the moment was in a tremor. Horses could sense, as regards each other, the presence of qualities that men could not perceive. But Jackson grunted: "Humph! nobody can teach me nothin'. I ain't afeared. Thanks, all the same. Here goes!"

With that, he dismounted, unsaddled, walked to Bar Eight's animal; and, with the aid of numerous cowboys, proceeded to attach his saddle and hackamore to that unlovely brute. Jinglebob muttered to Tex: "Better let me do the ridin'," but Tex shook his head. Thereat Jinglebob, covertly freeing his six-gun in its holster, crowded to one side of Bill atop of Woof, and unobtrusively signalled Evans to guard the other side. Coincidentally Sleepy Joe and Kansas Ed sandwiched The Duke's cayuse between themselves, and their right hands also fumbled an instant at their weapons' housings.

In time, the accoutering of the buckner was completed. Jackson climbed into the saddle, carefully set himself in

place, wriggled himself into perfect balance, gathered the reins into proper tension, and airily commanded: "All set. Let 'er—" He had intended to add "slide," but the horse beneath him allowed no opportunity. The beast, which, until Jackson pulled upon its reins, gave unskilled observers no indication of being more than particularly intractable, was, at the instant of this tug, transformed into a fiend.

Breaking loose from the holding punchers, the creature first emitted not the usual so-called bawl of a pitching bronco, but instead a veritable shriek. At the end of five swift forward leaps, the animal, descending upon the summit of a little mound which formed a serviceable fulcrum, bounced ahead and upward so eccentrically as to effect a frontal summersault and to land back-down upon the ground. An instant later, the horse, having scrambled to its feet, loosed a second screech, and thereupon began to dance upon Jackson's body. Next, with nostrils distended, eyes bulging and foam flying from its mouth, the brute turned to attack the van of the punchers who were hastening toward what had once been a man. A fusillade of pistol shots, and the bronco fell dead.

The Duke and Bill had seen a "pinwheel" intentionally performed by a so-called man-killer, and thus they had witnessed the extreme which bucking could reach. Dangerous as were the side-throw and the back-throw, these were relatively trivial in comparison with the pinwheel or forward summersault; a gyration which happily was attempted by only a very rare animal. A man-killer was a horse possessed of homicidal mania. Insane creatures of this type were few, perhaps not more than one in a hundred and fifty thousand horses.

True, one horse in approximately each ten thousand was sufficiently like a man-killer as deliberately to jump on its thrown rider's prostrate body; but Bar Eight's brute had done more than this, it had made a subsequent attack on other persons.

By this time, all of Bar Eight's men except the few herders with their cattle had gathered in a compact group. Their complacency had disappeared and they were plainly worried. They had reason to be, for, although they were muttering among themselves, none of the many punchers weaving in and out around them was saying a word. These weaving, silent punchers were, without realizing it, waiting for some authoritative voice to give a command for violence to begin.

Righteous indignation was ready, at any instant, to change into brutal retribution. Jinglebob's side-throw had been the product of chance. His buckner had been picked at random from horses collected haphazard on the range. But Bar Eight's buckner was in a different atmosphere. This brute, so it seemed, had been in Bar Eight's custody for some time. The cattle country might smile at roughness, but it frowned at murder.

Before anything untoward could occur, Goff, a forceful man, and Tex, assumed command. At Goff's question, "Did any o' you folks have reason to know that hoss would man-kill?" Bar Eight's owner began to bluster. But, when two cowboys glanced at the cottonwood tree, this blusterer quieted; and thereupon his foreman, speaking in a manly way, declared: "No, we's had him eight days. Never saw him afore that. Knowed he was bad, and 'd side-throw an' bite; but he never showed his real self. That's honest." Goff and Tex each looked this

speaker squarely in the eye, then glanced at each other and approvingly nodded, and thereby the incident was closed. Some hours later, Owens confided to The Duke that he had never seen so near an approach to hanging.

As soon as the incident was closed, Tex, in jocular tone, suggested: "Boys, reckon Bar Eight's ready to pay her bets;" and, at this, the pockets of Bar Eight began to empty. The fifty dollars for which Jackson had striven were delivered to a syndicate elected by vote of all the punchers outside of Bar Eight's employ; and, pursuant to instructions embodied in this vote, the syndicate was, for the greater benefit of Jackson's heirs, to hazard the money in a faro game when any member of the syndicate should next visit Miles City.

Jackson's saddle, it was agreed, should be held by the Fiddle-back Ranch against the time a rightful owner should appear. Ordinarily a dead cowboy's saddle would pass to whatever person his riding mates by majority vote selected; but, in this case, Jackson had been too recent a comer for anybody present to possess the privilege of a vote.

The body, its clothing having been neatly arranged, was wrapped in a blanket and deposited in a dug grave; and, on this grave and around it, rocks were piled as a deterrent to coyotes.

This done, Tumbling K's folk started for their distant camp beside their trail herd; and, by midnight, they had reached their goal.

On this journey, the conversation, while it lasted, was in the main lugubrious since the decease of Jackson was fresh in mind; and cowboys, as a class, were apt to be at times quite sentimental. Nearly all men accustomed to

great danger in any calling have this tendency to indulge occasionally in sombre fancy as concerns, not themselves, but their fellows.

The suddenness and violence of Jackson's ending provoked little comment, because they were tacitly assumed to be logical concomitants of a cowboy's end; but there were expressions of regret that, having to die, he had not died at his home. Nobody knew the location of this imaginary home; and everybody, if pressed, would promptly have admitted that it undoubtedly did not exist. Nevertheless the lament persisted. Punchers, fatalists as regards their own prospective deaths, indifferent as regards the character of their own prospective death-beds, were jealous for the presence of decency at the last couch of their companions. Out of all this, came the element of sadness which tintured so many of the cowboys' songs.

Of whatever incidents there were in this dismal ride, Bill, long years afterward, recalled, in definite detail, but three. One was his own drowsiness, and also the fact that Jinglebob had constantly ridden by his side, lest he, if overcome by sleep, might fall from his saddle. Another was Jinglebob's philosophic utterance: "Success is the size o' the hole a man leaves when he dies." And the third was the crooning in which Jinglebob presently engaged himself. Following a particularly mournful reference to Jackson's demise, somebody had casually mentioned Henry Adams. And thereupon Jinglebob began to hum the selfsame "spiritual" which he had sung that night beside the trail herd; and now as then, at the close of each reiteration of "In the holiness of the Lord," there came a catch in the voice.

The next morning saw the trail herd resume its march.

Three days later, when going into camp in late after-

noon, Cookey suggested: "Only one night after this one. Let's clean out the wagon now, so that it 'll look ship-shape when we reach the ranch." Accordingly, with the aid of The Duke and Bill, the vehicle was ridded of all it contained. At a front corner and in the lowest stratum was found a crated package which palpably had never been unpacked. This package gave forth a large tin dishpan, circular in shape. It had been included in the equipment through anticipation of The Duke's reputed finicality; but, as soon as loaded on the wagon, its existence had been forgotten. Bill now placed it on edge between two clumps of sage-brush that completely hid it, and again it was forgotten. The wagon was reloaded, supper was eaten, the nightherding began, quiet settled on the camp; and, all the time, the dishpan was crouching in its lair. A dishpan can crouch, this one proved it. And presently a gentle breeze arose, a breeze such as is beloved by crouching dishpans that wish to move.

The list of alleged causes for stampede is very large. It contains, for example, the lighting of a cigarette, a loud sneeze by either horse or rider, a night horse's stumbling or else shaking its saddle, the cry of a wolf, the falling of a tree or rock, the smell of blood, a flash of lightning, the roar of thunder, a pistol shot, the slatting of an untied wagon sheet, a pack of cards tossed by the wind, a man's hat blowing off, the cracking of a stick, the sight or scent of a bear, the unexpected coming upon a band of sheep or upon its trail, the sudden beginning or ceasing of rain or hail, the unanticipated view either of a log floating in a stream or of the moon rising between two horizon-screening hills, a facing of a low-lying sun when swimming across a river.

But the real cause was not one of these occurrences,

but instead the fact that, before the outbreak, there had existed in the herd an underlying condition of latent hysteria or nervous instability. The very animals which on Monday would march resolutely through pelting hail might on Tuesday "roll their tails in glory" when a cowboy blew his nose.

Tumbling K's men, however, after their trail drive, made bold to assert that, for facility of method and certainty of result, nothing could outdo a collision between a bronco's heels and a brand-new dishpan that traveling on edge was, at two o'clock in the morning, rolling down a gentle slope into the midst of a remuda.

Out of the darkness came a sound like that made by cymbals. A single wild snort was the immediate precursor to a tumult of lows, and almost instantly came the crash of rending sage-brush and the thunder from well-nigh thirteen thousand hoofs. Bear in mind that these cattle were no stodgy fatlings. They were lithesome old-time long horns that had little reason to envy a horse his speed. The three nightherders on duty at the time, Jinglebob, Plummer, and Evans, had raced off with the herd. Less than a minute afterward not a soul was in camp save only Cookey, The Duke, and Bill. The echoes from galloping ponies told that ten additional men were scudding in pursuit of the leaders.

After dawn, Bill, from an inspection of the neighborhood, obtained a considerable amount of data for descriptive entry in his diary. When a herd stampeded, it chiselled the ground as though a brigade of cavalry had charged across it. Sage-brush, mesquite, and chaparral would be torn into shreds, fences would be changed into jackstraws, and sometimes even vehicles would be turned

into splinters. The passage of a running herd through a railway's snow fence of horizontal slats produced a noise akin to that made by a burst of fire from a machine gun. A weight of approximately eleven hundred tons, when moving at high speed, formed no mean projectile.

Fortunately Tumbling K's cattle, in their onrush, not only had spared the camp and the remuda, but also had moved in the direction in which it had been intended they should later march. Consequently when, in mid-afternoon, the herd had been rounded-up and tallied, the net result was ascertained to be that no horse or rider had been killed or injured, that the drove was eight miles nearer its destination than it normally should have been, that the mortality list was limited to six cattle—two of them killed outright and four which, because of broken legs, had to be destroyed—and that thirteen men on spent horses were tired, dirty, hungry, and profane.

All of the local cattle that had been caught in the stampede had now been cut out and chased away. And so, upon the plain, stood Tumbling K's herd virtually intact in membership, though a bit disfigured through the loss of many horns.

There now remained for the thirteen weary, cursing men nothing to do but await the coming of the chuck wagon and remuda, or else send messengers for them. The waiting was voted a hopeless task, for Cookey was supposedly the only one at camp who would be competent either to drive or to wrangle.

Pete and Slim, however, had barely turned their horses into the back-trail when a rumble was heard; and coincidentally there appeared, on top of a nearby "roll" of ground, the chuck wagon, driven, if you please, by The

Duke. Down the roll's hither side the vehicle safely coasted; The Duke meanwhile waving his foot in aimless searches for the brake and, with a hand-over-hand motion like that of a drowning man, pulling in the reins. Behind the thrice-welcome chuck wagon came the cavvy, which was promenading in decency because it was directed by Cookey, who was on top of a horse, and by Woof, who was underneath Bill. Sam Evans later insisted that Woof had winked when he passed him.

Owens had guessed correctly on which action to take, as between whether to follow the herd or not. It was a dicer's choice, inasmuch as the introduction of a chuck wagon and remuda into the theatre of an uncompleted stampede would be most inadvisable; and also, if the racing herd were to "split" and later disintegrate, there would be no assured route for the driver to follow, no assured place for some of the cowboys to seek the wagon.

A camp fire was soon started; and, although Owens manfully confessed the cause of the stampede, though suppressing Bill's confederacy in it, his sin was forgiven because of the alleged excellence of the coffee which he presently concocted. A possibly additional cause for amnesty was that the punchers were too fagged to chap him.

At four o'clock the next afternoon, Tex, riding far forward at point, rose in his stirrups; and, cupping his hands about his mouth, let forth a long-drawn and ululant "Whoo-up! whoo-up! whoo-pee!" In front of him was a group of log buildings and corrals. It was the home ranch of Tumbling K. Out from the main house poured Pieface, Uncle Jim, and Oxford. Out from the bunk house came Slush Eye, the local wrangler. These last named four people gazed appreciatively as Tex, committed to bring thirty-two hundred and six cattle from Col-

orado, was jauntily leading thirty-two hundred and seven into the ranch of their destination.

Among Tex's men companions of the voyage, five covertly patted their rabbit's feet or other talismans, Pete reverentially touched his scapular; and the drive had ended.

Immediately after reaching the ranch house it proved necessary to insert a name in the casualty list of Tumbling K. Kansas Ed, carrying a saddle, stepped upon one of its latigos, tripped, and fell. Before anybody had a chance so much as even to smile, Ed, rising from the floor and giving the saddle a lusty kick, announced in a straining high-pitched voice: "That saddle's the last straw. Give me my time. I'm quittin' now."

Nervous exhaustion from overtraining had expressed itself in his petulance. Nothing could be done by either side. Kansas had delivered an ultimatum he did not intend, but his pride as a top rider would not permit him to retract it. Pieface too had pride, and thus as foreman would not condescend to urge Ed to any second thought. Wherefore, within an hour, Kansas Ed rode away upon a horse loaned him for the purpose. Outwardly he was jaunty, but inwardly dejected. His departure evoked none but the most friendly acts and statements on the part of everybody who witnessed it, for there was conviction that his rancor was transient and that it was not harbored against any person at the ranch. However, there was unmentioned belief that continuing pride would keep him from seeking reemployment by the local outfit before the occurrence of some event which might suggest that his accepting the reemployment was for the purpose of assisting the ranch to overcome a difficulty.

That night the herd was held in bondage as on pre-

ceding nights. The next day was pungent with the stench of charring hair and frying skin, inasmuch as all the newly arrived cattle were sent in single file through narrow chutes beside which stood punchers with red hot irons. The brand of Tumbling K was seared onto every beast.

The last brute to be touched by a cautery was Quantrell. He indignantly departed, with the frame of the chute's terminal bars hanging from his horns.

Cowboys drove the freshly decorated cattle into the stretches far behind the cluster of ranch buildings; and there left them, to assort themselves automatically into small squads that scattered themselves over many square miles of territory.

Bill supposed that this marked a final dispersion of the trail herd; but, as presently will appear, the herd was later to reassemble and to enact a tragedy.

CHAPTER XII

JINGLEBOB FULFILLS HIS DESTINY

Now, except for desultory line ridings made in order to hold the new cattle within bounds, to fend these beasts away from quicksand and the noxious loco weed, and to insure that they were not harrassed by predatory men or animals, there was little for Tumbling K's folk to do, save to await the arrival of two prospective trail herds and to anticipate winter. Thus Tumbling K's folk were, for the time being, in a state best described by the words upon a sign which long adorned a certain ranch in Arizona: "Forty miles from wood, Forty miles from water, Four miles from hell, God bless our home."

But winter was to come. The Duke had long since returned to college. With shortening days, Oxford, as Bill's schoolmaster, was coercing him into longer hours of study, and he thereby provoked from grinning Jinglebob the philosophic observation: "'Pears like it's goin' to be a very hard season."

Forty-eight hours more and the bitterness of a northern climate asserted its command. From now on it, in the language of the locality, would be winter till late in the spring.

At the entrance of both the bunk house and the ranch house a rope was installed which, with one end securely fastened to the door-jamb and the other end available to be clutched, was long enough to stretch, not only from

one building to the other, but also to the corral, the barn, the storehouse, and the woodpile. Each of these ropes was a life line, to be grasped in blinding snow-storms by whoever had to venture out of doors.

With this advent of winter, the punchers were relieved from certain tasks, only to gain others. No longer was there chance of prairie fire, the blanket of snow assured against that. No more was there danger from bogs, quicksands, and sink-holes; their maws were frozen. Cloudburst and cyclone were creatures of the warmer weather. Sheep had, by their owners, been immured within their own home ranges. Farmers were, for the time being, not attempting to settle on new lands.

Nevertheless, outridings, sign ridings, stray ridings, and line ridings had to continue. Live stock needed always oversight and frequently either assistance or restraint. Wolves did not hibernate, and neither did all cattle thieves.

For the patrolling cowboy, conditions were far from comfortable when the thermometer saw fit to register under, say, thirty to fifty degrees below zero; and, at the same time, his duties required him to eschew even the rude shelter of a line camp and to remain in the open for several successive days and nights. Luxury did not surround a bed that was tunnelled into a snow bank. "I'm friz, I is; but I'll keep on a-joggin', 'cause I'm ridin' for the brand."

The puncher had always to know where grass was plentiful and the snow above it reasonably shallow, and unremittingly to attempt the confining of his wards to the better territory; for the animals' only food was the grass, and they could reach it in no other way than by pawing

through the snow. Although twigs, lichens, and the bark of trees might be eaten by starving cattle, such things were not food. They were innutritious fillers which dulled the pangs of hunger, but added nothing to vitality. Horses, more adept than cattle at pawing for rations, could obtain provender through a snow blanket of even four feet in depth, provided the snow were powdery; but let a thick crust of ice form atop the snow, and the story would be very different. A thaw, immediately followed by a freeze, was death for many of the creatures on the range.

Snowless stretches were not immune from peril; because rain, if promptly succeeded by material drop in temperature, turned each blade of grass into an icicle that live stock could not eat.

Though the horse herds ordinarily were able to take care of themselves, the cattle frequently lacked initiative to search for food. When bothered by the wind, unless prevented by the cowboys, they would leave the hillsides where the snow had been so much blown away that grass was within pawing reach; and thereupon the beasts, intent upon escaping from the blast, would congregate either in the valleys' bottoms or in so-called box canyons.

In the valleys' bottoms, the drift-covered forage would have proved insufficient for the many beasts even if they could have delved to it. As for box-canyons—gorges with but a single open end, blind alleys riven into a hillside—each of them offered its inmates imprisonment for life as soon as the doorway had been closed by an avalanche or a high pile of snow.

Upon threat of an impending storm, were it day or were it night, out went the riders to hustle their charges

either into the lee of trees or rocks or else into such swales as, being at a right-angle with the blast's prospective course, gave promise of not becoming wholly buried under snow. And, above all, it was the effort of these cowboys to keep the live stock from clustering into a marching phalanx which, aligned like a normal trail herd but unofficered by any men, would, in long and continuous column, begin despairingly and savagely a parade that headed to leeward and that led to death.

This, the so-called winter drift, was the heaviest tragedy afforded by the Northern range; for it was relentless in its treatment not only of the animals that marched, but also of the punchers who, faithful to their duty, strove either to prevent its beginning or to disperse it after it had gotten under way.

This form of winter drift, made as it was only in stormy weather, was an affair very different from the more mild excursions in which a group of beasts might, in wintertime and on a self-selected route, travel for miles; all the way unwittingly bettering themselves by ploughing a wide cut through the snows. Eventually stopped by some obstacle, the jaunting brutes, too stupid to have attempted foraging on their outward journey, would about-face and, retracing their former trail, would graze their way along its partly cleared bottom and back to their starting-point.

In contrast with these mild excursions, the drift by animals that in wholesale numbers were trudging in a blizzard had, save for the night stampede started by a cyclone, but one dramatic rival in cattle land; and this rival was the staggering across a desert by a water-seeking trail herd which, temporarily stone-blind from thirst, was in charge

of men who, themselves well-nigh dead from thirstiness, would not quit their cattle.

December had come and gone. Except for a meagre celebration wherewith the people at the ranch house had attempted, for Bill's sake, to stress Christmas, there had been no noteworthy happening. From time to time, a puncher would ride in from one of the line camps, would load a pack horse with the bacon, sugar, and flour necessary to supplement this line camp's dwindling stores, would fill himself with hot beans and steaming coffee, and then uncomplainingly would grasp the tow-line of the pack horse and start a return to his outpost cabin. But, in the main, there was nothing except gelidity of air and unflagging vigilance by frostbitten men. The ink bottle, in order to make writing possible, was kept upon the kitchen stove—black ice would not flow.

Bill was strenuously, if unenthusiastically, buckled to his school books; and Oxford, his pedagogic instincts reawakened, was tutorially "pouring in leather."

So well did Oxford's pupil acquit himself in the biassed estimation of Uncle Jim that, one day in mid January, Uncle Jim, to the ravishment of Bill, unexpectedly suggested: "Looks as though there'd be settled weather for some time to come. How'd you like to go with Jinglebob and Sam Evans to the Big Hole line camp when they move there tomorrow and relieve Tex and Shorty Brown? You needn't stay the whole two weeks; because, if you get sick of it, either Jinglebob or Sam can herd you back."

Early the next morning, Bill, Jinglebob, and Evans were already traveling toward the Big Hole camp. Clad in buffalo-skin overcoats, with hat brims tied down over their ears to avert frostbites and with eye sockets black-

ened with soot to thwart snow blindness, they were not a comely crew. In the words of Evans, "Bill, if you's half as wicked as you look, you's sure o' a reserved seat in hell." Bill, on his own part, would have been utterly carefree, if his modest war sack had not contained some school books which Oxford, having extracted from their hiding place, had brutally exhibited in the presence of Uncle Jim.

In due time, the Big Hole line camp was reached. Bill had seen it previously on a number of occasions, but always in warm weather. Never had it seemed so delightful as it did now. This little residence of one room—its front built of logs; its rear, a dugout in a hillside—suggested adventure, and insured freedom from Oxford. That evening, Bill, rejoicing yet in academic liberty, considered his housing still delectable despite the facts that he had to wear his overcoat indoors, that the only light came from a smoking open fire, from cracks in the cookstove, and from a single candle, and despite the further fact that the whole interior reeked with a sour and vault-like odor.

One corner of the log front impinged on a small corral in which was a shed for sheltering night horses; and, opening out of the corral, was a tiny barn. Bill, as yet unacquainted with snow-storms of major rank, thought that Evans probably was joking when he said: "This arrangement's easier nor the life-lines at the ranch; acause, by holdin' ont' the side o' the house, you can always find the corral, an' onc't inside o' the corral, you can always reach the shed or barn 'thout any chanst o' gettin' lost."

For several successive days, Jinglebob and Evans being away from dawn till dark, Bill found amusement in the vicinity of the cabin; setting traps that caught noth-

ing and taking short rides on Woof. Steadily it was growing colder. Steadily the wind grew more abusive. Out of doors, each inhalation stung the throat and lungs as though with splinters of glass. Indoors, the combined efforts of the fireplace and the cookstove did not melt the ice upon the cabin's floor.

Each night, Jinglebob and Evans would mutteringly confer about what action should be taken on the morrow; for, as they described in scant detail to Bill, the situation was becoming worse and worse. The gale that started days ago was, even to the present moment, blustering over the uplands; and the cattle, already weakened and emaciated, were refusing any longer to combat it. The beasts, despite all that Jinglebob and Evans could do, were concentrating in the lowlands.

One of the few outstanding bits of playfulness in this term of exacting days broke forth one afternoon when Jinglebob, on his return, found Bill sitting disconsolate in the half-light of the rancid cabin, struggling with the text on a page of one of the school books. Partly in humor and partly because of misguided sympathy with Bill's discomforture, Jinglebob inquired: "Is them erudited siwash volumes distressin' you?" Upon a frank, if sheepishly uttered, Yes," Jinglebob continued: "You helped me out once, so I'll stand by you now." And with that, to Bill's amazement, joy, and horror, all of his annoying library was tossed into the stove.

When, long years afterward, Bill inspected the untidy pages of his crumbled diary, he found that the final entry read:

"jan. 24 awful cold. Jinglebob says it must be more than forty Below. I didn't do anything all day except stay in the cabin and keep the fire going and except go to the corral and feed the poneys

hay. The boys was (oh darn) the boys were out all day driving the catle out of the vallies, but the catle wont go. Evans said the catle were dying like flys, and Jinglebob interrupted him and said 'no, like republicans.' This was a joke. Jinglebob comes from Texas."

What actually happened after the date of that entry was as follows:

On the morning of January twenty-fifth, Bill woke to find that Jinglebob and Evans were very much astir. One was replenishing the fire in the cookstove and was hastily preparing breakfast. The other had gone to the corral and was rapidly saddling horses. The sketchiness of the breakfast's preparation would, in itself, have given an inkling that speed was thought by the two cowboys to be a desideratum. But Bill did not have to rely on this mere hint, seeing that Jinglebob affirmatively declared to him: "Things prob'ly is goin' to pop. You's seen cows stampe, now you'll likely see the weather do it.

"Don't use the coffee pot for makin' coffee, 'tain't fast enough. Use the fryin' pan; an', for the love o' Mike, don't stop to empty out the grease.

"Why are we hustlin'? Stick your head out the door an' you'll quick learn why."

Bill did stick his head out of the door; but, if he had cared to speak, he would have said that the picture did not seem to him as fearsome as on the previous days when, with the atmosphere so crystalline as to bring wreckage into bold distinctness, the gale was knifing its way through superfrigid air.

In contrast, there was now no air in motion; but this inactivity was sodden, rather than restful. There was no assertive color in the landscape. Trees, hills, sky, and snow were alike in utter lack of distinctive character. Al-

though an observer would have marked anything he peeked at as appearing to be gray, nothing stood forth by reason of its shape or tinction. The entire landscape might well have been the product of a painter who, affecting monochrome, omitted varnish from his pigment.

Now and again in front of the dead sky a thread of white cloud would form far overhead; would insanely toss about; and then, fraying into nothingness, would disappear. And, all this time, save in the corral and in the cabin, there was absolute stillness. The cabin yielded such noises as might well be expected to be caused by men. And in the corral the horses—all of them facing northward, all of them with ears cocked forward and eyes straining to the front, all of them giving occasional nervous twitches—these horses would now and then shake their saddles or emit querulous snorts.

The two cowboys had finished their breakfast, each of them having had a single gulp of greasy lukewarm liquid, and nothing more. When starting for his bronco, one of the men turned to Bill and implored him: "Don't go one inch from here," and then added: "Two extry hosses in the corral is a'ready saddled. Watch an' feed the hosses, but don't dare go further 'an the corral. There's 'nother extry saddle an' hackamore in the cabin. Stick 'em on the blue roan. Keep the coffee hot, for the boys at the upper camp may be crowded down to us an' need it. Good luck! so long."

As the two punchers rode away, one of them singing, the other whistling, there droned from out of nowhere in particular the long-drawn cry of a coyote; not derisive this time, but a wail.

Bill raised his hand, to wave to Jinglebob. A snowflake

fluttered downward to his feet, another snowflake quivered in its wake, there was a puffing sound, the atmosphere gave a throb, and, before his hand could lower, the air was almost solid with swirling whiteness.

All that day and all of the succeeding night the snow poured down; but, all the while, the wind, though stalwart and relentless, refrained from rioting. Late that day and again shortly before dawn on the following day, Jinglebob and Evans, coming separately, made fleeting visits at the line camp, staying there no longer than was needful for a change of horse and for the swallowing of a cup of coffee.

The ability to change horses and to secure coffee was a very unusual luxury. It was due to the facts, first, that the cattle had happened to select for their rendezvous a section not many miles distant from the cabin, and as yet had evidenced no intention to begin a massed parade; and, second, that the tempest, though limiting vision to a radius of three feet, had not been so erratic in its movements as to baffle the men's instinct for direction. Thus far the punchers had unerringly known where the cabin lay.

On that second morning, at the time of sunrise—there was no sunrise which could be seen—the wind, increasing its strength, assumed madness and venom. Though pushing, in the main, from north to south, it reserved the right to eddy and to thrust on various diagonals. The temperature had fallen; and the descending snow had become stark, sharp-faceted particles which, scudding here slantingly and there horizontally, were, like a sandblast, tearing at whatever they encountered. The horses, the coyote, and the torn wisps of white cloud had been accurate prophets.

The bedlam had been in progress for some two hours, when, without warning, a hole opened in the storm. This cleft gave to Bill a fugitive view of all that was transpiring on the plain before the cabin. Cattle, perhaps seven thousand of them foregathered from the various nooks and corners of the local range, were, with drooping heads, huddled into a compact group. Their backs were covered with frost and with patches of slush and snow. Icicles hung from their lips and from the sockets of their eyes. They appeared not so much like living animals as like the monsters that occasionally intrude in dreams. As the hole opened in the storm, the wind lulled for a few seconds into silence; but there was no tonal void, inasmuch as seven thousand discouraged beasts were moaning, bleating, and were mooing a dirge.

Humps here and there in the snow fields beyond these cattle indicated recent deaths. Of these mounds, the little ones represented calves, the larger ones betokened more sizable animals. And, wherever a small hummock and a large one were very close together, it was virtually certain that, when the calf died, the mother cow had stood beside the body, had licked it till her tongue froze, and then had fallen.

Thus far the swarming cattle had remained at the place of their congregation. But it was a foregone conclusion that, unless the storm soon abated, some forceful steer, after uttering a commanding moo, would step out upon the route to leeward; and that some seven thousand brutes, all of them now in hypnotic state, would stagger after him. Each animal, keeping true to the wind's course, would struggle onward till the animal dropped; and where it dropped it died.

These creatures, so soon as self-hypnotized in favor of

their lethal march, would resent all attempt to save them, and would savagely attack whoever essayed a rescue.

Such as this was the picture that Bill glimpsed, and he was not emboldened by it. He realized that he, Jinglebob, Evans, and nine other men were probably the only people within a fenceless tract the size of Massachusetts. In the last twenty-four hours this thought had several times come to him; and, every time it came, he had put another cupful of ground coffee into the coffee pot.

Consequently the most potent coffee was ready for Plummer when he unexpectedly arrived. As the rift in the storm uncovered, Bill noticed that four horsemen were on the plain before him. He minded as well, not only that one, after being charged by a steer, had dismounted and was stumblingly leading his limping steed in the direction of the cabin; but that another was rapidly riding toward the same goal.

This mounted man presently reached the cabin and stiffly descended from his weary bronco. It was Plummer. Through lips swollen and cut by frost and from cheeks blotched with the white of frozen skin, he peremptorily ordered: "Quick! Help me get hosses out the corral. Jinglebob's afoot. I can change here; but Terril's bronc's 'bout all in, so he'll need 'nother. Me an' Terril's jus' been crowded down from the upper range, the cattle there is driftin' here."

While Plummer was talking, Bill almost absent-mindedly reached into the cabin; and, having gotten hold of the coffee pot, handed it to the weather-beaten cowboy. And, as the battered puncher finished speaking, Bill, with no small amount of inward pride, answered: "Four horses already saddled are in the shed, three beside Woof.

All we got to do is to tighten latigos. Jinglebob told me to."

In response to this, Bill heard what then seemed to him the greatest praise any person could hope anywhere to win. Plummer—no less than Plummer, segundo on the trail drive—looked at him in open-mouthed astonishment, and then asserted: "Bill, you's sloughed bein' pilgrim, an' now you's folks." A glance toward the shed so much assured Plummer as to the readiness of the horses, that he was content to delay long enough to drink from the coffee pot. And, as he finished his draught, he gratefully remarked to Bill: "Thanks for that. It's my yesterday's breakfast."

A peek under the cover of the pot was followed by the shadow of an amused smile, and thereupon Plummer volunteered: "Been stokin' 'er good, I see." With that, he emptied the pot of half its contents—it was almost solidly filled with grounds—dashed in some water from a kettle on the stove, placed the coffee pot beside the kettle, poked a log into the stove, and said: "Terril may have a gamblin' chance o' tastin' it. He's hungry, too. C'mon."

The four saddled broncos were led from the corral. Plummer traded saddles with one of them, drove his jaded animal into the enclosure, closed the bars, and poked his hand behind him in order to take from Bill the lead reins of the two horses that were destined for Jinglebob and Terril. But he received only a single set of reins; and, turning to learn the cause, found that Bill was already mounted on Woof and had snubbed the second set to his own saddle horn. Plummer smiled approvingly, peered at the sky, mumbled to himself "Reckon it's safe 'nough," and then announced: "C'mon."

It was but a few hundred yards to where Jinglebob was toiling up the gentle slope that flowed from the cabin's door, and so Bill was quick in reaching him. Jinglebob gave Bill an appreciative look, the mist an anxious glance; dismounted; took from Bill the reins of the fresh bronco; and was in the act of handing him those of the discarded steed when a loud hiss swept across the sky. The air, which for a while had held only scattering snowflakes, now jumped into a seething drive of blinding sleet. And the wind fairly exploded. At this, Jinglebob's deserted horse, despite its tiredness, flinched so violently as to pull Bill and Woof a few paces away from Jinglebob; and, in that white swirl, a few paces meant invisibility.

Jinglebob, try as he did, could not find Bill. He went to the cabin, but it was empty. Shouts and even pistol shots could not register above the gale.

Bill had no conception as to the direction in which the cabin was, and Woof's instinct was all, not for the corral, but for the herd. The storm had now grown to be a full-fledged blizzard. It was an inferno done in ice and snow, instead of flames. Nevertheless Woof, to the best of his ability, was doing what the little horse thought was desired of him. And thus it was that Bill was soon in the familiar position of a swing rider, but his present herd was lunatic.

Bill's numbness from fear vanished, but numbness from cold began to take its place. Hour after hour, Woof carried him forward with the moving herd; Woof sometimes floundering in the snow piles and again, when on firmer surface, gaining on the marching column and coming nearer to its point. Woof knew that the point was the place for strategy and action; that, if the point could

be turned from the present route, the drift might be dispersed and the cattle saved.

Eventually the unhappy flank rider reached the point. Chilled into sleepiness, he was swaying in his saddle when Woof, unsteadied by a thrust of wind, bumped into something; and, at this, Bill fell sideways from his saddle. In falling, he brushed against the obstacle that Woof had met. It was a horse with Jinglebob atop of it. Instantly Jinglebob dismounted. But, as he tried to hoist Bill into erect position, a lethargic hand released Woof's reins; and then, suddenly sagging, knocked from Jinglebob's grasp the other reins that had been in it. Two riderless horses, blown onward by the wind for a step or two, had thus gone beyond the reach of Jinglebob's voice; and so, after an instant's hesitation, they resumed their forward plodding beside the cattle.

Bill, the next day, achieved a faint recollection of having heard Jinglebob shout in his ear: "Wake up or you'll freeze," of having felt himself shaken, beaten with a quirt, dragged along the snow, again beaten, and finally pushed into a bed that, shaggy and ill-smelling, seemed to radiate some warmth.

Two broncos with empty saddles nickered at the ranch house door as the storm was ending. Within ten minutes, a search party was back-tracking on the vague trail these beasts had made. Successive mounds of snow were found to cover nothing but dead cattle. But presently the searchers came to one that yielded more. Crowded between the legs of a steer and against its body—a steer that had been shot, this doubtless to prevent its moving—crowded against this steer lay Bill, alive and, except for

frostbites and quirt welts upon his face, uninjured. He was clad, just as he had been when he left the line camp, in his own buffalo coat. But his legs and feet were wrapped in another overcoat. And on top the pile lay, coatless and with arms protectingly outspread, a chunk of ice which, on the conclusion of the round-up, had ridden a bucking horse.

Bill, promptly taken to the ranch and put to bed, was for twenty-four hours in a stupor; and then, suddenly emerging from the torpor, was himself again, save that there was soreness in his muscles and that there were bruises on his face.

As he turned in his bunk, his eyes lighted on a saddle with which he was intimately acquainted. And, as his eyes reached this resting spot and focussed on a row of conchas each embossed with the letter "J," Pieface, the one visitor in the room, said gently: "The boys jus' now brung it in. They thought you'd like to keep it."

Before Bill could do more than give a moan, Pieface went on: "Didn't the Ol' Man speak to you 'bout Jinglebob? No? Well, I'll be damned! He should a-done it." And thereat Pieface, in a very tender way, told Bill about the finding of Jinglebob, but he omitted any reference to a loaned overcoat.

A moment later, he stepped to the side of the bunk; and, putting his hand on Bill's shoulder, muttered: "Don't take on so. You nowise forced his death. He'd a-done it for the cows, acause he was ridin' for the brand."



A puncher in from one of the line camps,

“Dream back beyond the cramping lanes
To glories that have been—
The camp smoke on the sunset plains,
The riders loping in:
Loose rein and rowelled heel to spare,
The wind our only guide,
For youth was in the saddle there
With half a world to ride.” *

* From “Grass Grown Trails,” by Badger Clark.



PS **Western
Americana**

3500 Rollins, Philip Ashton, 1869-
R754 Jinglebob; a true story of a real cowboy.
J6 New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1927.
262p. illus. 21cm.

1.Cowboys. I.Title.

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